

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 47.

Price, Five Cents.

JESSE JAMES FOILED

OR
THE PINKERTONS' BEST PLAY



JESSE LIFTED OUT THE HALF-FAINTING GIRL, AND A SECOND LATER, HORSES, COACH AND ALL WENT CRASHING OVER THE PRECIPICE.

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Jesse James Foiled;

OR,

THE PINKERTONS' BEST PLAY.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER I.

THE OUTLAW IN DEADLY PERIL.

A lumbering stagecoach was making its way from Bear Gulch to Mud Hollow, in the Salmon Mountains. The stage was behind time and the sun was setting.

The driver, Jim Cole, bawled at the leader, while Bob Bates, one of the nerviest "shotgun messengers" in that section, sat beside him on the box and snored like a steam engine.

Inside of the stage were three passengers, two men and a girl. They had been riding all day and were asleep, apparently.

Suddenly, a pistol cracked, and one of the leaders went down.

The messenger was awake in a second, and had raised his weapon.

"What ther deuce?" he began, just as the door of the coach flew open.

"Hold on! Hello, up thar! What's up?" yelled a lusty voice.

The driver was swearing at his horses as they plunged and reared on the very brink of a precipice. He had glanced around sharply, but there was no one in sight.

The shot had come from a rock to the left of the path and about forty feet ahead.

It was hardly large enough to conceal a man, yet he knew there must be one behind it.

The shotgun messenger had answered the excited passenger's questions:

"It's a holdup, you fool! Can't you tell thet thar without askin'?"

The stage door opened wider and the man stumbled out.

A sudden lurch of the coach sent him sprawling head-foremost.

A second later there was a shriek from the young

girl, and the third passenger, a man of herculean build, leaped out and began a search of the fallen man's pockets.

"Hello! Thar's somethin' wrong at both ends, I reckon!" began Jim Cole, glancing over his shoulder. "Cussed if thet thar ain't a road agent, pard! We've been fooled by ther rascal! Git er bead on him, an' be quick about it!"

The messenger would have obeyed, but he had other business to attend to.

Another bullet came from the same direction as the first, and the second leader fell dead in its harness.

Jim Cole ripped out an oath as he realized his position.

He was hemmed in by rocks on one side and the abyss yawned upon the other.

Old hand at the ribbons as he was, the situation alarmed him. He wound the lines around his wrists and braced himself for the ordeal.

Crack! went the pistol again, and a bullet whizzed past the messenger's ears, while the girl inside of the coach kept up her shrieking.

The two remaining horses were beside themselves with fear.

A sharp struggle between the two men behind was in progress.

Jim Cole pulled the horses to their haunches, just as the robber delivered a knockout blow.

With a leap they reared again.

This time he could not hold them.

Bob Bates leaped to the ground. He had thought of the girl inside of the coach, and for just a second his obligations to the express company were forgotten.

He meant to try to save the girl, in preference to the strongbox, which was under the driver's seat, and contained ten thousand dollars in bank notes.

As he reached the ground, Cole dropped the lines and followed him. They were hardly upon their feet when each received a stinging blow in the face.

Then an athletic road agent who had been a passenger in the coach threw open the stage door, which had closed in the jolting. He caught the half-fainting girl in his arms and lifted her out.

The next second horses, coach and all went crashing over the precipice.

When they struck on the rocks, fifty feet below,

the gorge between the hills gave back strange echoes.

The moment the girl was safe, the man who had saved her gave a shrill whistle.

Bob Bates opened his eyes and took a quick look at him.

He was too dazed to move, but he comprehended the situation.

When he saw who his passenger was, he rolled over on his back and closed his eyes.

The next minute the scene had changed like magic and he was listening to what most men would have called a blood-curdling conversation.

"Whoop! Hello, Frank! Get a move on, Nig Spicer! I've knocked out the pair of 'em, but they'll come to in a minute! I want one of you to stand guard while I go down after that strongbox!"

"Better not undertake that climb, Jess! It's fully fifty feet to the bottom!" warned a voice, and a man wearing a black mask came from behind the rock.

Another specimen of brute manhood dropped down from an oak, twenty yards away, and approached the group.

He was black as the ace of spades, but there was a mask over the upper half of his face, and he was armed to the teeth with murderous-looking weapons.

Neither Jim Cole nor Bates moved a muscle as they came up. They were both brave men, but they knew their captors.

Those two names, "Jess and Frank," were enough for them.

They knew they had fallen into the hands of the "James gang."

Jesse James had disguised himself, and ridden all day in the stage. It proved that he was the cleverest road agent on record, for both of these men were aware that he was in this section, and had been warned to look out for him. In spite of the warning, he had fooled them completely.

Now their lives were in his hands.

Jesse James was a determined man, and he was obliged to be cautious.

He was "wanted" by every sheriff and governor west of the Mississippi. Moreover, there was a reward of ten thousand dollars offered for his head by the United States Government.

The great outlaw was thinking of this when he answered his brother.

"I've got to have the money, Frank! It's in bank notes, and can be used with greater ease than nuggets. I'll need it, I reckon, before I get out of California."

"But you are risking your life, Jess," went on the other, as he picked up the messenger's "sawed-off" shotgun, and extracted the charges.

"Bosh! As if that was anything new!" retorted his brother.

He uncoiled a long horsehair lariat as he spoke, which he had taken from his pocket.

Nig Spicer, the villainous-looking negro, disarmed the driver, and was just in the act of putting his hand on the young woman's shoulder.

The girl gave a shrill cry, and attempted to run.

Jesse James roared at the fellow in a voice that sounded like a clap of thunder.

"Let the gal alone, Nig! She's under my protection! Lay your black hand on so much as her shawl and I'll blow a window in you."

The girl stopped running at this, and crept back to the group.

A minute later she was kneeling beside the elderly man, who had been knocked into unconsciousness by one of the sledge-hammer blows of the outlaw.

Jesse James tied the lariat around his waist just under the arms; then he passed the loose end of it to his brother.

"I reckon it's long enough. I had it made for just this business! Keep a bead on all four of them, Nig! Don't forget the gal! She looks as sweet as a peach, but women are deceitful!" he rattled off, glibly.

The three men had been disarmed now, and the girl had no weapon. Nig nodded his head.

His part of the work looked easy.

Frank James braced himself near the edge of the precipice, and Jesse James looked over into the chasm.

In the darkness below he could outline a black mass, which he knew to be a jumble of stagecoach and horses.

"Nig will help you pull me up! Don't let go!" said the outlaw, as he began the descent.

The young girl turned, and looked at him, her eyes widening in horror.

The whole thing had happened so quickly that she had hardly collected her senses.

She knew these men were bandits, or "road agents," of the worst description.

They had struck her father a blow and killed him, for all she knew; yet, in spite of this, she looked upon Jesse James' next act with horror.

She never expected to see him appear alive from the depths of that cañon.

Frank James uncoiled the lariat as his brother went down.

It tightened slowly at first, and then Jesse began jerking it a little.

"Take a look and see what he wants, Nig! I don't dare go any nearer," he ordered.

The negro looked at the three men. Bob Bates was groaning as if he was coming to his senses. The driver was breathing hard, and his muscles were twitching.

The elderly man still lay as stiff as a graven image.

"Reckon I kin risk it," muttered the negro, as he advanced to the edge of the cliff.

Jesse James hallooed up to him the minute he leaned over.

"I've got the box on the lariat! Pull it up, and then let the rope down again! There's a package of registered mail aboard that feels heavy!"

Nig repeated the message, and the lariat was pulled up.

Frank James untied the box, and then tied a stone on the end of the horse-hair rope.

When it dangled down again Jesse James secured it around his body.

Nig turned back to his charges, and found Bob Bates upon his feet.

He had sprung up like a cat, but his knees looked shaky. The negro pulled a bead on him, and he threw up both hands promptly.

"Reckon, I won't turn my back on you ag'in, curse you," muttered the negro, with a grin. "Yer a slick duck, Bates! Haw! Haw! It's a wonder Jess fooled yer! He couldn't er done it if he wasn't er corker!"

"He's all of thet thar! I knew my day'd come some time," growled Bates, a little sheepishly. "It's ther fust time, tho', an' I've been runnin' on this hyar route fer nine years or over!"

"Look at Jim Cole, Nig! The fellow is stirring!" warned Frank James, taking a look over his shoulder.

It was growing dark rapidly now, and the three men were fully ten feet from each other.

Nig walked backward a few steps, keeping his pistol leveled at the messenger.

He was stopped short by Jim Cole jumping suddenly to his feet, and letting out a stiff right-hander. At the same instant Bob Bates made a dash for his weapon. The fellow held it with an iron grip, even after he went down, with Cole on top of him.

Frank James wheeled around, but Jesse jerked the lariat taut at that minute.

He had to use all his strength to help pull his brother up. When he was straining every nerve, he became aware of a fresh danger. There was a clatter of hoofs over the rocky road, and a party of four men dashed up like a cyclone.

"Whoop! Hold on, boys! We've caught 'em!" yelled the leader. He pulled his horse to its haunches to keep from running over the girl.

A cry from Nig followed.

He was being throttled.

Frank James caught a few words before they were shut off entirely.

"It's the sleuth-hounds, d——n them! Yer must fight or run——"

Frank James lost no time in taking the last alternative. He dropped the end of the lariat, and took to his heels.

He was out of sight in the darkness, while the newcomers were pulling in their horses, and trying to discover which were passengers and which were bandits. The young girl came to her senses at that minute, and made a few explanations.

"Quick! Help us, if you are honest men! We've been held up and robbed, and the coach has gone over! That was Jesse James who went down! He's after the mail pouch and money!"

The leader of the four riders slipped from his saddle at once.

Bob Bates looked up from over the strangled negro, and grinned at him.

"Thar's one less of ther curses, pard! We've killed ther nigger! Now then, which way did Frank James go? Jess is down below! I reckon he broke his neck when Frank let go ther lariat!"

Jim Cole was putting one of the negro's pistols into his belt as he answered the question.

"Frank bolted into ther rocks at ther right! I reckon he knows thar's er pass through ther bowlders

ter ther holler! We kin overhaul ther rascal when we've corralled ther mail pouch! Haw! Haw! It was kind of Jess ter save ther bank notes for us!"

He picked up the box as he spoke, and closed his arms over it. The three other men had dismounted, and were holding their horses by the bridles.

One of them leaned over the shoulder of the young girl as she bent again over her father.

"So Jess is down below, is he?" asked the leader of the four, in a curiously strained voice.

"Thet thar's whar he is, pard! Reckon I'd best drop er stun on ther reptile ter be sure he's dead," was Cole's answer.

He lifted a big stone as he spoke, but his companion stopped him.

"Hold on, pard! If it is really Jesse James we must have his body! The government will never believe he's dead unless it sees his carcass! I move we pull him up somehow or other. We're from the Pinkerton Agency, you see, so we've got to do it!"

"Snakes! Thet thar's luck! They're sleuth-hounds, pard!" yelled Cole, looking over his shoulder.

"Kerzackly what ther coon said with his last breath," was the answer. "I reckon now them was ther only truthful words thet thar scamp ever spoke, and he wouldn't er let them slip ef he hadn't been er dyin'!"

"I don't know how he knew us, but it's all right," went on the detective. "Come on, boys! Get your wits to work! It looks as though our work in California was about ended! If Jesse James is dead in the chasm below we've got to get a move on and rescue his body!"

"And what if he ain't dead? I can't seem to get it through my head that it's true, Star," laughed one of the others.

Will Star, the most famous detective from the well-known Chicago agency, nodded his head as he answered:

"We'll bear that in mind, Jake! I'll believe he's dead when I see him, and not before! That's the only reason why I want to recover his body. It's too good to be true! Splice your lariats, boys, while I hold the horses! I'm going down after Jess and that pouch of letters!"

CHAPTER II.

THE OUTLAW'S DARING ATTEMPT.

The young girl held her breath at these daring words.

It was bad enough for a robber to attempt this feat, but it chilled her marrow to think of an honest man attempting it.

Jake West, one of the detectives, had raised her father to a sitting posture, and given him a drink of whisky. When she saw that he was reviving, she seemed to recover her spirits.

"Oh, sir, don't go down!" she pleaded. "If he isn't dead, he may put a bullet through you!"

"Exactly what he will do! You can trust Jess for that!" laughed Star, as he watched the splicing.

Jim Cole took the bridles out of his hand, and quieted the horses. When the young girl saw that her words had no influence in stopping Star, she knelt by her father and put her arms around him.

Five minutes later the detective's head disappeared over the brink of the chasm.

His three companions were paying out the lariat, while Bob Bates lay flat on the ground and looked down at the dangling form, as it disappeared in the darkness.

What would be the fate of their friend they did not know.

It was one of the riskiest things that the brave detective had ever undertaken.

They shuddered as they thought of what might await him.

Suppose Jesse James had escaped, and was crouching in some crevice between the rocks?

Over and over again Jesse James had escaped death when the chances were against him.

There were those who thought that he bore a charmed life. Danger of every description would environ him, yet he always came out alive and a little more daring than ever.

It did not seem possible that this could be the case now; still, knowing him as they did, the detectives could not help being anxious.

Star was beloved by his friends, and his deed was a trifle foolhardy. He was risking his life to satisfy the government and the people.

It was a foolhardiness that would be deplored, and yet appreciated, if it resulted in a fatality.

It would be asight that would thrill the robber

with joy to see the detective's body dangling helplessly over the chasm.

Every man up above strained his ears as he thought of this possibility.

They expected to hear a pistol shot or feel the lariat swing free at any second.

There was a breath of relief when Star finally shouted up to them:

"Pull me up, boys! The cur isn't here! Pull steady! A little to the right, where the rocks are smoother!"

The men obeyed promptly.

As they moved three feet farther to the right, a pistol cracked below them.

There was a gasp of horror, but the rope did not slacken.

A second later there was a sharp jerk that showed the detective was still living.

Bob Bates leaned further over the chasm, taking the risk of getting a bullet through his head, and bawled down into the darkness:

"Who fired that shot, pard? Was it you or thet thar cursed robber?"

There was no reply, except another jerk of the lariat, which had begun to slacken while Bates was yelling.

"Hold on, Bates! He can't answer for fear of showing the rascal where he is! Jess is alive, all right, and it's nip and tuck between 'em!" said Bob Lindsay, another detective.

There was another silence after that. The men waited and listened, but there was not a sound from the chasm.

Jim Cole had entrusted the horses to the young girl, and was on the lookout for Frank James.

He did not mean that the second greatest rascal in the country should come back when he was not wanted without meeting a reception as hot as bullets could make it.

Colonel Hank Spencer, the elderly passenger, had recovered his senses, and his daughter explained the situation in a hurried whisper.

When he learned who his fellow passenger had been, the gentleman was startled.

He felt in his inside pocket, where he had been carrying a wad of several thousand dollars.

The bank notes were gone, as were his watch, two pistols and a valuable scarf pin.

Miss Spencer had already gone over her own possessions, and found none of them missing.

She wore a handsome watch, and carried a small sum of money, but the robber had made good a well-known brag.

It was stated that he claimed never to war on women.

This, perhaps, was one of the many good traits that the outlaw possessed, but that did not weigh in his favor at the present minute.

If the group on the brink of the chasm could have seen him they would have seen him at his worst. Fortunately for him, the darkness screened him, and no amount of guessing could ever quite picture his present situation.

Half-way down the face of the cliff he was crouching on all fours. The space was so narrow that he was obliged to dig his nails into the rocks to prevent losing his balance and pitching down head foremost.

It was this position that had saved Star during his descent into the chasm, but, by using his teeth, the outlaw had managed to discharge his weapon.

He hoped the sound of it would scare the detective so that he would lose his foothold.

When he found that this had not occurred, he was mad with fury. Star had escaped him by creeping a little to one side, but, as the detective did not know his plight, he did not know what to do next. He was afraid to swing out, and let his friends pull him up, for fear of the outlaw seeing him.

To climb up without help was absolutely impossible.

The monotony of the situation was broken by the three detectives, who could not endure the strain any longer.

Another dark body appeared over the edge of the cliff, and began to descend.

Both Star and Jesse James saw it outlined against the sky, and crouched closer to the rocks in order to avoid it.

When it was ten feet above Star's head he recognized it.

The boys were lowering the dead body of the negro in the hope of either scaring the outlaw or dislodging him from his position. It looked for a minute as though they were going to knock Star down instead.

The detective jerked the lariat sharply, and the body swerved a little.

As it swung close to Jesse James the outlaw suddenly took desperate chances.

Star suddenly caught sight of him standing erect. He leaped forward at the same time. There was a dull thud on the rocks below a second later.

Jesse James had performed a marvelous feat.

He had cut the lariat with his knife and allowed the dead body to drop at the very second that he swung his own weight upon it.

Star's eyes flew open at this demonstration of agility.

Jesse James had never done anything before that so excited his admiration. The outlaw hung to the lariat like a dead weight after he had secured a good hold.

Star expected every second to see the slippery rope slide through his fingers, but he hung on like grim death.

The outlaw was taking desperate chances.

It was his play to be pulled up by the three detectives.

If they did not recognize him before he reached the top there would be a chance to do a little damage.

He preferred the risk of being shot above ground to dying in the chasm. Star tried to warn the boys, as quick as he collected his senses. The lariat was still around his waist, so he jerked it gently, thinking it best not to shout, and tell the outlaw his position.

There was no response to his pull upon the rope.

He jerked it again, and then gave a cry of horror.

His friends had fastened it to a rock while they lowered the dead negro.

Jesse would be up on top before he could tell them their error.

Some one hallooed down the chasm just then.

"We've knocked him down, pards! Thet thar will settle him, I reckon! Pull ther dead nigger up; he's done his duty, and then all get hold of ther tother lariat together!"

This explained the situation, and Star waited no longer.

He made a megaphone of his hands, and sent his voice up the rocks like a clarion.

The words were drowned by a pistol cracking.

Jesse James was holding on with one hand, and had fired with the other.

Star shouted again, with the same result.

Another report of the outlaw's weapon drowned his words completely.

The men above were still pulling at the rope, and Star nerved himself for a final effort.

Just as he succeeded in bracing himself so that he could pull a bead on the dangling form above his head he caught a cry from Bob Bates that showed that his friends were growing cautious.

"Hold on, pards! Let ther cuss hang a minute!" he bawled. "Thar's too much racket down thar fer one man ter make! Wait till ther smoke rolls away, and I kin git a look at ther nigger!"

"He's ther liveliest corpse I ever handled!" came in a fainter voice. "Hold him just as he is, boys, till I jerk the other lariat!"

Star felt a tug on the rope that was around his belt at that minute, and he promptly responded with a strong pull on the lariat.

There was a cry from above, and then Bob Bates leaned over the chasm again.

"Whoop! Hullo! It's Jess, by ther eternals!" he shouted at the top of his lungs. "Ther cuss has cut ther lariat and dropped ther nigger! Hold him steady, pards, while I pepper ther sinner!"

Star held his breath, and leaned close to the rocks.

He was glad the boys had recognized the outlaw, but he hated to lose the body.

Before a pistol could speak something shot by him in the darkness.

"By Jove! He's let go the lasso himself!" he ejaculated, as he heard a thud below him. "Curse the rascal! He's game clear through! When he found his trick wasn't going to work he——"

The last words were cut short by something tapping him in the face.

It was the loose end of the lariat that had been dropped by the men above him.

A second later the echo of the pistol shots died out completely, and the smoke passed away, so that the brink of the cliff was again outlined clearly.

"Hello, Star!" shouted Jake West, in an anxious voice.

The detective answered promptly:

"All right, Jake! Pull me up, boys! Steady, and swing her out as far as you can! I've had enough of this hole, and I'm coming up for a consultation!"

There was a cheer from the men, and then the lariat tightened. Bob Bates gave the word, and the ascent was begun.

As Star swung out to clear himself from the rocks, he felt a peculiar sensation, and for a minute he was so dizzy that he could hardly keep his wits about him.

The men above were pulling steadily, and Star's body rose to within three feet of the brink.

Bob Bates leaned further out, and extended his arms.

He had just caught Star's shoulder when the lariat parted.

There was a shriek from Miss Spencer, as the four men went sprawling over backward, and the detective shot downward with the speed of a comet.

CHAPTER III.

JESSE JAMES' STRATAGEM.

The detective struck squarely upon the pile of dead horses. He bounded off against the rocks, and lay unconscious for several minutes.

When he finally opened his eyes, Jesse James was bending over him. They were in the bed of the gorge, and the stars looked like candles, they were so far above them.

The first words of the outlaw brought the detective to his senses. "Cussed if you ain't the nerviest chap I ever met! You deserve another chance, Will Star, and, by the eternals, you are going to have it!"

Star did not answer.

He was aching all over.

As he moved to relieve a severe pain in one arm, Jesse James took a flask from his pocket, and offered it to him.

"The stuff is all right! It ain't drugged," he said, with a chuckle.

Star smiled rather faintly.

The outlaw seated himself on a rock, and went on talking coolly.

"That was an awful drop! We'd both have been killed if it hadn't been for the horses! Wonder what your friends up above are thinking? Reckon they fancy we are dead as last year's lizards. Ha! Ha! If they do, it's because they don't know us!"

Star put his hand to his belt before he answered.

Jesse James broke into another laugh, as he saw the movement.

"I've got your pops, Will Star!" he said, jovially. "Reckon, now, you didn't expect to find 'em, did you?"

"What are you going to do with me, now you've got me?" asked Star, indifferently.

The outlaw glanced up at the frowning cliff above them before he answered.

"I was waitin' to see what those curs up yonder are going to do. I'd have chanced another ride on the lariat, now that I've made a change in my costume," he said, finally.

Star opened his eyes and stared a little, then passed his hand over his shirt and trousers.

"I see! You've exchanged togs with me!" he said, quietly.

"Yes, I thought it would be safer. If I can get my head above the cliff up yonder there'll be three detectives less in the world, I reckon! It's a deuced shame they've given up so easy. They might have spliced their lariats——"

"That's what they did do. There's no use waiting for that, Jess!" broke in Star, sitting up. "The game is in your hands! All you've got to do is play it, but before you put a bullet through me, just answer me one question. How the blooming blazes do you ever expect to get out of this gully?"

The outlaw roared with laughter.

Star's indifference to his fate amused him.

He had no objection whatever to answering the question.

"There's a path out of the cussed hole, but it's a trifle steep, I reckon. I could do it all right if I hadn't broken my ankle."

He groaned as he spoke, and Star stared at him in amazement.

He had put up such a good bluff that the detective did not dream that he was injured.

"I did it dragging you down from the mess up yonder," he explained between his groans. "I'd have shown more sense if I'd have run a knife into you and left you, but, to tell the truth, I was too hot for that. I brought you down here because I wanted the fun of talking to you, and I'll have it yet, in spite of my ankle."

There was an ugly ring in his voice that Star knew meant business.

Besides, he was familiar with the outlaws' methods of dealing with detectives.

As the outlaw continued groaning, Star did some

rapid thinking. While he felt that his hours were numbered, still it was his disposition to die fighting. He meant to play his last card before Jesse James claimed a victory, and added him to the dozens who had fallen his victims.

"Better let me help you out of the gorge before you murder me, Jess! There's nothing like making good use of your enemies," he said, dryly.

Jesse James gave him a quick look.

"As if I could trust you, you whelp!" he muttered, savagely.

"I reckon you could trust me if there was a reward in sight. I'll make a bargain with you, Jess!" began the detective.

"Let's have it!" growled the outlaw, with another keen look.

"I'll help you out of the gorge if you'll give me back my pistol and one chance to use it! A duel at twenty paces would suit me to a T!"

"Bah! I could kill you before you pulled the trigger!" snapped the bandit.

"I'm not so sure! Give me a chance and see!" urged Star.

The outlaw's eyes began to snap. He was always eager to show his skill at handling a shooting-iron, and, besides, he was in need of the detective's assistance.

"I'll give you your chance, you cur!" he said, finally. "I'm in bad shape to travel, and I need your help. Get me up to the level, within easy reach of the stage route, and I'll give you your chance. I'll keep my finger on the trigger, meanwhile, and if you balk by so much as an inch I'll blow you to blazes!"

His voice had turned to a bulldog's growl.

Star felt cold chills up his spine as he listened to the words.

Jesse James tested the strength of his ankle, and went on with his growling.

"There's another little job you can do for me, Will Star. You can carry that cursed mail pouch over your shoulder. I've hung on to the thing since I found it, but it's growing heavy."

He threw the pouch at the detective as he spoke, and Star slipped the strap that was attached to it over his shoulder.

"I reckon I can use you in more ways than one," went on the outlaw. "I'm in for a siege with this broken bone, I reckon, and, of course, Frank is dead,

as well as the nigger. There'll be no way of getting to the hollow except by hoofing it."

He gave Star a keen look as he spoke, but the detective avoided it by glancing upward.

He did not mean that Jesse should know that Frank had escaped. Such news as that would act like a tonic on the bandit. He would be looking for his brother to come to his rescue at any minute, and the anticipation would keep him more alert than ever.

"Reckon Frank is dead?" repeated the outlaw again.

Star laughed a trifle hoarsely.

"You didn't suppose we'd lose both of you, did you?" he asked.

A curse followed the question.

"It'll mean another bullet in your carcass, you cur! I'll keep my word, and give you your chance, but disobey me by a word and I'll let daylight through you!"

"As if I didn't know that!" retorted Star, laughing. "Well, it's a novel position, to say the least! I'm on the warpath for your gore, but I have to wait and play lackey! Ha! Ha! A new feather in your cap, and one that will go down in history! I suppose you'll advertise the fact that your life was saved by a Pinkerton detective?"

Star was growing reckless, but the outlaw paid no attention to him.

He was sitting on the ground trying to bind up his ankle with one hand.

The other hand was kept employed pressing the hammer of his weapon. Star tried his strength by moving once or twice stealthily, but each time he caught a flash from the outlaw's eyes through the darkness.

"We detectives ain't bad fellows when you come to know us, Jess," he went on, while the outlaw struggled with the strip of flannel he was using for a bandage. "Of course, we've got to kill you if we can, but there ain't a coward in the Pinkerton agency, and if you're the best man, I'll admit it every time! Now then, shall I give you a lift with that bandage, Jess?"

The offer was accepted, but the outlaw took a firmer grip upon his pistol.

If Star had moved his hand an inch above the ankle he would have gone promptly to eternity, with

an ounce of lead in his body. When the job was completed Jesse James stood up.

Star staggered to his feet, for he was suffering intensely, and allowed the outlaw to rest his arm on his shoulder.

"Which way?" he asked, as Jesse James hesitated.

He glanced around as he spoke, but could see nothing but rocks all about them.

The bed of sand they were standing upon was not three feet wide, and stretched only about ten feet ahead in the inky darkness.

The outlaw got his bearings in less than a minute.

Leaning heavily upon Star, he limped straight to a narrow cut between the rocks that did not look wide enough to admit his body.

An hour of desperate climbing followed.

He forced Star to go ahead, and then half-lift him over the boulders.

When they finally reached the top, they were a mile from where they started, the whole distance being an incline of the rugged mountains. Over and over again Star had tried to get the advantage, but he was suffering such agony from his own bruises that he could not put his schemes into action.

Once, as the outlaw followed him through a narrow crevice, he tried to strike him with a rock. The click of a trigger almost under his nose made him abandon the intention.

Jesse James seemed to read his thoughts, and outwitted him, even in inky darkness.

It looked as though there was little to be hoped for when he had completed his services as lackey. His only hope was in the outlaw's promise.

There would be one more chance when he was again fingering his weapon.

The moment level ground was reached the outlaw gave the order to stop.

Star dreaded the thought of a duel just then, for he was shaking with fatigue and the pain from his injuries.

Fortunately for him, Jesse was in the same condition.

The outlaw intended to rest before the trial of skill.

As Star saw this, he dropped to the ground, promptly.

The next act of the outlaw made him grind his teeth savagely.

Jesse James leveled his weapon at his head, and ordered him to throw up his arms.

When his hands were extended above his head, the bandit tied his wrists together with a piece of strong cord.

The agony at first was almost unendurable, but Star dropped to the ground and lay without a murmur.

Jesse James made himself comfortable, with his back against a tree.

He did not relax his hold upon his weapon for a minute.

"We'll sleep an hour before I kill you," he said, with a sneer. "The moon will be higher by then. Lie quiet, you dog! A move and you are a dead man!"

Star did some hard thinking in the hour that followed.

The sky was clear now, and the night was balmy.

They were in a clump of trees to the left of the road over which the ill-fated stage had passed on its last journey.

Star began to wonder if he would be able to hold a pistol.

His fingers and wrists were growing stiff and rigid.

It was a mean advantage that the outlaw was taking.

Somewhere in the distance a timber wolf began howling.

It was a doleful sound, but it befitted the occasion.

Star glanced at the outlaw, and saw that his eyes were closed, but the detective knew he was not sleeping.

The wolf stopped howling after a minute, and all was still.

Suddenly Jesse James put his ear to the ground and listened intently.

Star did the same, and then both men sat erect and stared at each other.

"What the deuce is it?" asked Star, trying to work his hands a little looser.

Jesse James shook his head, and then gave a whoop of pleasure.

"By the eternals! It's another stage!" he said, in a low voice. "I reckon it's a special from Injun Hill to the Hollow! If it is, it's got five thousand on board! Ha! Ha! Here's a new rôle for you to

play, Will Star. You've got to help me hold up that stage and rob the passengers!"

He whipped out his knife as he spoke, and cut the cords around Star's hands.

He seemed to have forgotten his broken ankle entirely.

"I won't be much good as a road agent without a gun," began Star.

"Oh, you'll do all right! I'll cover the whole gang, after I've dropped the leaders. All you'll have to do is go through their pockets! They'll be so scared that you can do that easy. Just talk big and move fast! Quick! Get behind the tree yonder!"

Star moved toward the tree. He was a little dazed at the outlaw's orders.

Before he had gone ten paces he understood them better.

A bullet whistled past his ear, taking a lock of hair with it.

As he wheeled around another struck him squarely in the shoulder.

He dropped like a log, with his eyes on the bandit king's face. Jesse James looked merciless, with the moon lighting up his stern features.

It was only another demonstration of the outlaw's shrewdness.

As Star felt the world fading from under his feet, he knew that he had been tricked.

Just as he lapsed into unconsciousness, Jesse relieved him of the mail pouch.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND "HOLD UP."

There was no time for Jesse James to prove that Star was dead.

The stage was coming at a rattling pace, and he could hear the driver bawling at his leaders.

"The cur will keep! I'll have a look at him after I've done this job," he muttered, as he limped behind a tree on the edge of the roadway. The next second a heavy coach, drawn by six mules, came into view.

It was just as he had expected—a special stage from Injun Hill, a settlement ten miles distant, bringing money to pay off the miners at the hollow.

Jesse had known of the stage before, but the amount had not tempted him.

He did not expect to be able to make more than

one haul in that section, and the first stage was the prize that he had his eye upon.

Here was a second opportunity, after he had lost the first.

The moment the stage swung into view he took careful aim at the leaders:

Crack!

Crack!

As his revolver spoke, the two animals fell.

The outlaw did not stop, but emptied his weapon.

He wished to convey the idea that there was a dozen or more bandits lurking in the bushes.

His efforts were greeted by a chorus of yells and curses.

Waiting just long enough to reload his pistol, the outlaw darted behind another tree.

This changed the direction of his fire, and before the driver and his companion, another shotgun messenger, could locate him, he was pouring a chorus of leaden hail directly into their bodies. As the men pitched from their high seat, a woman's voice yelled shrilly from the window of the stage coach:

"My God! It's robbers! Oh, we shall all be murdered!"

"Hush! Keep quiet, madam, and I will protect you!" answered a weak masculine voice.

Jesse James strode up to the coach, with a cocked weapon in each hand.

The moment the woman saw him she gave a yell of terror.

"It's the devil! Save me! Save me!" she howled.

Some one jerked her down to the seat, and then a man's face showed at the window.

"Hands up! Not a move, my good man, or I'll make a corpse of you!" roared the outlaw.

The man gave a howl that rivaled the woman's, and, as Jesse James grabbed the handle of the door, he collapsed completely.

They were the only two passengers, and the outlaw looked disgusted when he saw them.

Except for the five thousand, which he felt sure was aboard, there was poor picking for a road agent.

"Get out, please, and let me look at you!" ordered the outlaw, promptly. "'Twouldn't be the first time I'd found diamonds on beggars if I was to find 'em on you! Shell out if you have any, and be quick about it!"

The man shuffled out, but the woman threw her shawl over her head, and began to cry.

There was one mule left uninjured, and the beast was plunging and kicking, but Jesse James, after taking a sharp look around, paid no attention to it.

Grasping the man by the collar, he shook him thoroughly; then, keeping an eye upon the woman, he proceeded to rifle his pockets. A watch, a pistol, and a small roll of bills rewarded his efforts.

Then, giving the trembling man another shake, he faced him about, and started him toward the clump of trees.

"Hands up! March!" he ordered.

The fellow walked away, with his knees knocking together.

Jesse James glanced at the woman again, and then climbed up to the driver's seat.

It took him but a minute to find the cashbox.

Carrying it to the nearest rock, he smashed it open and pocketed the money.

Then he cut the mule loose, and mounted upon his back.

The bandage had loosened around his ankle, and a dreadful pain in the broken joint made him faint for a moment.

"Curse the sleuthhound! He's dead beyond a doubt!" he muttered, as he turned the animal's head toward the hollow.

Just as the mule decided to move, he thought of the woman. He wheeled the animal again, and went back to the coach. The woman was sitting on the floor of the vehicle, rocking back and forth, and moaning.

"There'll be a mule team by here at noon to-morrow, madam," he said, gruffly. "I reckon it won't kill you to wait for them, inasmuch as you have company. Just tell them, will you, that Jesse James held up the coach all by his lonesome, and corralled the five thousand, and, by the way, there's a dead sleuth from Pinkerton's lying yonder among the trees! The government may be interested in recovering his body!"

He laughed scornfully as he spoke, and then turned the mule again.

This time he did not so much as look back over his shoulder, but hurried on down the road as fast as his mount could carry him.

When he passed the scene of the first hold up, he rode with a weapon in each hand.

He fully expected to be overhauled by the three detectives, who had been left to do a little guessing when he and Star went over the precipice.

There was no one in sight, so he kept on toward the hollow, taking the short cut through the rocks that Jim Cole had mentioned. As he rode along, he talked to himself, and his meditations proved the shrewdness of his nature.

It was his knowledge of men that made him so successful. He knew exactly what to expect, and was rarely off his guard for a minute.

"Reckon they're down below, trying to find that cur's body," he growled, as he scanned the rocks. "Now, if I knew whether Frank was dead or alive, I'd get on to their game. If he's alive the rascals have divided forces, if he's dead, then——"

A low whistle from behind a boulder interrupted him.

He recognized it instantly, as he supposed, and answered it.

A second later some one crept from behind the rocks.

Jesse James opened his eyes wide, and stared as if he had seen an apparition.

Some one had imitated his brother's whistle.

"Hello, Jess!"

The words were spoken with the utmost indifference.

Jesse James leveled a pistol at the fellow's head, and returned the salutation.

"Hello! Who the devil are you?"

A harsh laugh followed, and the man moved out farther into the moonlight.

"It's too bad I didn't get along before, Jess," he went on, jovially. "I reckon now you bit off more'n you could chew ter-night, didn't you? I overheard a conversation an hour ago that gives me thet thar impression."

"Who did the talkin', stranger?" asked the outlaw, shrewdly.

"Snakes an' crocodiles! Don't yer know me yet, Jess?" retorted the man.

"By the eternals, if it ain't Milt Sharp! What the deuce are you doing here?" asked the outlaw, after another look at the fellow.

There was another laugh, and Milton Sharp, "the lone highwayman," who usually operated in Nevada, came close to the mule.

"I was layin' fer ther Injun Hill stage, Jess," he

said, honestly. "I'm a little shy on nerve, so I decided not to tackle Jim Cole an' his side partner; besides, I knew ther colonel was a fighter, an' hed been held up before——"

"Bosh! He was as weak-kneed as a chicken! His daughter had more spunk than he did!" broke in Jesse James.

"Then I'm a fool not ter hev risked it! I reckon, tho', 'twouldn't hev done me much good, seein' you was ahead. How much hev yer made out of ther night's work, pardner?"

Jesse James shook his head, and let out a volley of curses.

Sharp listened to the story of the fall over the precipice, but the knowledge that the money was not in the outlaw's hands seemed to please him mightily.

"Reckon I'll overhaul that combination before they get rid of ther stuff," he said, with a chuckle.

Jesse James raised the trigger of his weapon, coolly, and leaned forward over the mule's head.

"Tell me what you heard to-night, word for word," he said, sternly.

The "lone highwayman" looked surprised when he saw the outlaw's muzzle so near his face.

He gave vent to his disapproval in the customary manner.

"Curse you, Jess! What ther devil do you mean? I ain't above tellin' what they said, that is, if it's worth anything to yer!"

Jesse James ran his left hand into his pocket, and pulled out a couple of bills.

Sharp glanced at them critically, and decided to tell his story.

"I was waitin' fer ther stage jest below hyar in ther gap, when I saw a galoot skulkin' by," he began. "Cussed if it wasn't Frank, goin' as if ther devil was after him, and——"

"You mean my brother?" broke in the outlaw.

Sharp nodded his head, and put the bills in his pocket without lowering his hand below the buckle of his suspenders.

"I 'lowed you two had planned to hold up ther stage further down ther cut, an' I was jest chucklin' ter think I had ther bulge on yer, when er passel of riders came along. Ther minute I clapped eyes on 'em I knew you'd done yer worst. They was Jim Cole and Bates, with the colonel's daughter between

'em, and the old man and three sleuths bringing up the rear——"

"And you let 'em go on?" snapped Jesse James, savagely.

"See, hyar, pard!"

Milton Sharp lowered his voice to a dignified whisper.

"I may be a road agent, but I'm cussed if I'm a murderer! No man ever lost his life through me, Jesse James! Hang it, I'm clever enough to steal without bloodshed! If I wasn't I'd quit robbin' this confounded minute!"

He drew himself up with pride as he spoke, and, in point of fact, the fellow was speaking honestly. Milton Sharp was known to be a successful "road agent," but no one ever could prove that he was guilty of murder.

Jesse James' only reply to his statements was a groan of anguish. His ankle was paining him.

Sharp pricked up his ears, and looked at him with interest.

"My ankle is broken. Got any liniment about you?" asked Jesse, shortly.

Sharp pulled a bottle from his pocket, and passed it over.

"Put it on for me, Sharp. I'll pay you for your trouble," said Jesse, with another click of the trigger.

The "lone highwayman" laughed.

"Snakes! You must be carryin' a wad, Jess! Reckon, now, yer don' think I'm such a fool as ter hold you up, do you, pard?" he asked, jokingly.

"I'm not taking any chances. There, that's better," remarked Jesse, as Sharp cut off his shoe with a bowie.

The liniment was applied, and Jesse James handed out another bill.

At that minute Sharp made a discovery that amused him.

The detective's clothing was so tight for the outlaw that it gave his figure a grotesque appearance.

"You ought to see him," said Jesse, when Sharp mentioned it; then the outlaw threw his head back, and let out a roar of laughter.

"I reckon, now, the governor will open his eyes when he sees those togs!" he roared. "And, as for old Pinkerton, the cuss will have hydrophobia! Ha! Ha! A good joke! The best I ever played on a

sleuth-hound! I've sent the whelp home to be buried, with my shirt and breeches on!"

"What do yer mean, Jess? You said you left him back yonder in the trees!"

"With that brace of idiots to keep him company, and a mule team due over ther route to-morrow, he'll get back to Chicago without a doubt!" chuckled the outlaw.

"Hanged if I don't wish I could be there to see the commotion! There's a dozen of the reptiles that'll recognize the clothes the minute they clap eyes on 'em!"

He was so amused over the situation that he almost forgot Sharp for a second.

When he looked at him again, his companion was fingering a weapon.

"Good-by, and good luck, Jess!" said the "lone highwayman," tersely.

He raised his weapon as he spoke, and began backing toward a clump of bowlders.

Jesse James did not answer, nor move a muscle.

When Sharp disappeared behind the rocks, he went on toward the hollow.

The moon was sinking now, and the path was growing narrower. He had left the stage route, and was following a trail that wound among the rocks.

There were points where it took hard squeezing to get through, and before he had gone a mile his ankle was as bad as ever. Jesse waited until the path had widened a little, and a fringe of scrub oaks had taken the place of the bowlders for a little distance. He dismounted carefully, and put his ear to the ground.

Not hearing anything, he picked his way between the trees, and, tying the mule to a limb, he dropped to the ground, and once more attempted to ease the pain in his ankle.

There was not a sound, and the place was as dark as a pocket.

The moon had disappeared, and only a few stars were shining. The outlaw made himself as comfortable as possible, and in an hour he was asleep.

It was a risky thing to do, but he was desperately in need of it. At daylight the mule awoke him by braying loudly.

The outlaw sprang to his feet, and looked around.

Not ten feet away a half-breed Indian was seated upon the ground, with a rifle across his knees. As Jesse pulled a bead on him in the twinkling of an

eye, the half-breed raised one hand and made an odd gesture.

Jesse James put his pistol back into his belt, with a sigh of relief, and then fell back upon the ground by the side of his strange companion.

CHAPTER V.

TREACHERY IN THE "GANG."

"So it's you, Black Bear?" he began.

The half-breed grunted.

"What's the news? Any signs of trouble at the Hollow?"

"No. Everything quiet."

The Indian answered without apparently moving a muscle.

"Is Frank there?"

"No!"

Jesse James looked astonished.

"Frank is waiting in the Witches' Cave. The sleuths have gone on to the hollow," explained the Indian.

"Then the whelps down yonder have heard by this time that I am coming! By the eternals, they shall not be disappointed!"

"There's nothing at the hollow, Jess!"

"Bah! That's all you know about it!"

"Milt Sharp has been there!"

"What!"

The half-breed nodded.

He stretched out one leg to rest it before he answered.

"He held up the mule team, and robbed the treasure shack! There's nothing left! The men think you did it!"

"Yet you said they were quiet?"

The Indian grinned.

"They are waiting," he said, quietly.

"I see! That's different. If there's nothing in sight, I'll cut for the border. No use risking my head in a hornet's nest; still, I'd like another chance at that strong box, confound it!"

"The sleuths have hid it, Jess."

The Indian's eyes glittered as he gave the information.

Jesse James turned on him instantly.

"Where have they hidden it, you mongrel?"

"Easy, Jess! I won't tell!" growled the half-breed.

Jesse James jumped to his feet, and drew his weapon.

"Curse you for a sneakin' coyote!" he began, excitedly.

The Indian stretched out the other leg, and took a chew of tobacco.

"Do you refuse to tell where the stuff is hid, you yaller-faced mongrel?" roared the outlaw.

"Look a'hyar, Jess, bizness is bizness! What'll yer give ter know?" asked Black Bear, sullenly.

Jesse James' cruel eyes took on a crafty expression.

"I'll give you a third of what's in the box, if you'll capture it," he said, promptly.

The Indian shrugged his shoulders and chewed hard for a minute.

"See here, you skulkin' redskin!" went on Jess, more cautiously, "you seem to have forgotten that you belong to the James gang, and that I am the captain! If you know where those curs have hidden the box, it's your business to tell, and, by the pernicious polecats! you've got to do it!"

He snapped the trigger of his weapon, but the half-breed only grunted.

He had no fear of Jesse shooting him until he had learned all he could about the money.

"I've got to divvy with Frank as well as you, so I can't share even," went on the outlaw. "There's ten thousand in the box, and it's all in banknotes! There'll be no bother with dust and nuggets! Come! talk fast, you scamp! Will you lead me to the box, or will you go and get it? By the jumping sandhills! you'll do one or the other!"

He was dancing up and down now, and the half-breed gave him a sharp look.

A second later, the mule brayed again.

The creature wanted water.

Black Bear sprang to his feet with the quickness of a cat.

"There's a spring just ahead; I'll water the beast, Jess!" he began.

Jesse James stepped between the fellow and the mule.

He held the cocked revolver poised on a line with the half-breed's eye.

His face was a dull gray and his lips were ashen.

"Not a step, curse you!" he roared. "Quick! answer my question! Will you get that money? Re-

fuse, and, by the gods! I'll let daylight through you!"

"I'll get it, Jess! yer kin put up ther pop!" said the fellow, slowly.

The outlaw lowered the weapon, but did not put it in the holster.

There was a gleam in the half-savage rascal's eye that warned him to be cautious.

"Shall I water ther mule, Jess?" asked the fellow, after a second.

Jesse James picked up the mail pouch that he had laid upon the ground, and, sitting down, he ripped it open with his jack-knife.

"Yes, water the beast, and be quick about it! Leave your rifle where it is!" he ordered, sternly.

The half-breed obeyed, but there was a dull, red flush upon his cheeks.

As he led the mule toward the spring, Jesse James looked after him and chuckled.

"The snake will cut my throat, if I don't look out," he muttered, under his breath. "Curse the rascally redskins, anyhow! They are all a lot of traitors!"

There was a rustling in the trees behind him at that minute.

He had the registered letters in a pile upon the ground, but was on his feet in a second, as he heard the rustling.

"What's ter pay, Jess?" bawled the half-breed over his shoulder.

Jesse James had scanned every limb of every tree in the vicinity, and could see nothing.

Then he dropped to the ground and listened a second before he answered.

By placing his ear close to the ground he detected a faint vibration.

In a second he had gathered up the letters and stuffed them in his pocket.

Black Bear was out of sight, but not out of hearing.

Jesse James started after him, but walking backward.

He felt sure that some one was skulking from rock to rock and hiding behind trees when the shelter of the rocks failed him.

"An Indian trick!" he muttered, under his breath. "I wonder if that sneaking redskin has really turned traitor! If he has, I——"

The sentence was cut short by a gruff but decided order:

"Halt! Hands up, Jesse James! Another step and your career is ended!"

The outlaw wheeled like a flash.

Will Star stood before him.

He was near the spring, and the mule was between them.

There was not a sign of the treacherous half-breed.

"I've got a bead on you at last, Jesse James!" went on the detective. "Throw up your hands, you wretch, and be quick about it!"

The words were hardly uttered before there was a flash of fire.

The weapons of both men had spoken together.

Star went down upon one side of the mule, and the outlaw upon the other.

The creature was drinking, and did not budge an atom.

Black Bear crept out from behind a rock with a weak-kneed specimen of a man behind him.

It was the passenger that Jesse James had robbed and ordered into the clump of trees the previous evening.

As the weak-kneed individual bent over Star, the half-breed picked Jesse James up bodily, and threw him over the mule.

Then, by belaboring the creature vigorously, he started it toward the hollow.

There was no one to stop or even watch him, for Star was bleeding profusely, and the frightened man was working over him.

When Star came to his senses, the fellow, whose name was Barnes, was talking excitedly:

"Exactly what I was expectin'! You was a fool to foller him in sech shape as you was! Why, thet there fust wound was enough ter kill you! Now, I reckon you've got your last call, my fine young feller!"

Star tried to smile, and gave up the effort promptly.

Barnes wet his handkerchief at the spring and bathed his forehead.

"Where is he?" asked the detective, rallying sufficiently to look around.

"Ther Injun run off with him! Let ther sinner go! Ain't you full enough of bullets?"

"I reckon I am," said Star, very faintly.

Barnes tore his shirt into strips and did some fairly skillful bandaging.

The outlaw's first bullet had gone straight through Star's left shoulder.

The second bullet left the right arm hanging limp and lifeless.

"I reckon you'll lay by a while fer repairs now, young man," went on Barnes, who was growing brave, now that the outlaw was gone. "I reckon you'd best not move fer a time. I'll git over to the road and lay fer the mule team, by and by. Thet there son-of-a-gun said there was one due to pass this way by noon. Now, what in thunder has become of Miss Higgins?"

He raised his voice as he spoke, and his fellow-passenger came limping out from behind a pile of rocks.

She was ragged and dirty, and presented a wretched appearance.

"Is he dead?" she asked, with a gasp, as she pointed at Star.

Barnes shook his head, and put a pin in the bandage.

"Reckon he's darnation near it!" he said, candidly. "We was fools, you and me, when we let him foller ther cuss! We'd all on us hev been better off if we'd stuck ter ther stagecoach. I 'low we've had this hyar night's tramp all fer nuthin', Miss Higgins."

The woman dropped on the ground and began to cry.

She had flatly refused to be left alone in the stage coach, and the night's tramping over the rocks had worn her out completely.

Star was too weak to talk or move a muscle.

He lay like a log, with the woman moaning and groaning near him, until Barnes started off to look for the mule team.

It reached the spot a little ahead of schedule, but stopped to inspect the stage coach and the dead mules.

When they saw the signs of the first hold up, some one looked over the precipice.

There were six men on the team, but their faces were all as white as ashes when Barnes hailed them.

The half-scared-to-death fellow had hard work to tell his story.

He had to look down the barrels of six rifles as he talked, and his teeth chattered so he could hardly articulate.

When they finally believed that he was not responsible for the damage, the men listened eagerly.

An hour later, Star was lying in the cart, wrapped in half-a-dozen coats, and the men were bathing his wounds and dosing him with whisky.

As soon as he could talk connectedly, Star told them the whole story.

He ended by saying that Black Bear was a treacherous rascal.

He had promised to deliver Jesse into their hands for five thousand dollars.

Ten minutes later he had been bargaining with Jesse to get the strong box for him.

Star had finally gotten the best of him by drawing a bead on him unexpectedly while the cunning plotter was begging for a glimpse of the money.

There was no use trying to follow the outlaw now.

Star had worn himself out already with his exertions, and was anxious to get medical care as soon as possible.

A mile from Wind Hollow they overhauled the tracks of the mule.

They followed it until it left the road and struck east toward a spur of the Salmon Mountains.

Star did not know the locality well enough to venture an opinion, but one of the men pointed to a ledge of granite in the distance.

"I reckon ther redskin has toted Jess ter ther Witches' Cave! It's ther safest place hyarabouts! An army couldn't rout him outer them thar quarters!"

"If I was uninjured, I'd try it!" muttered Star under his breath.

The woman was seated on the cart near him and gave him a look of admiration.

Her spirits had revived wonderfully, and she finally stopped crying.

"We'll git you to ther holler afore you change yer mind and git after ther cuss, then," said one of the men. "I've heerd a lot about you Pinkerton fellers! Cuss me! if I can believe, tho', you went over thet cliff! Air yer sartin sure yer did it, stranger?"

Star tried to smile, but it was a sickly effort.

"I'm dead sure of it, pard, but I wouldn't do it again for a fortune! It's the foolhardiest thing I ever did, and I've done a good many since I got on the trail of that rascal!"

"Keep your eye peeled for ther cuss, pards!" warned Barnes, nervously—"I'm doggoned if I don't think he's the devil's double! Ther redskin was bad

enough, but Jess James ain't got no equal! Snakes! I'll never forgit my fust glimpse inter ther sinner's weapon!"

"And I won't forgit my last one," said Star, with a groan; "I thought there was a pound of lead in my body! I can't stand this jolting much longer, pardners!"

"Then we'll slow up a minute," began one of the men, who was bossing the animals

"Whoop! hello! what ther deuce?" broke in one of the men who had been walking by the leaders.

The driver flourished his whip and bawled for the mules to stop.

He pulled them to one side just in time to avoid a collision.

A group of men mounted on bronchos had swept around a steep turn in the path.

They were coming so fast that they could not have stopped, and the sudden swerve of the mules gave them room to pass safely.

"Queer how them thar rocks shut off ther sound!" muttered the driver, as he clapped his hand to the butt of a pistol.

He had left his rifle on the wagon, and Star was already reaching for it.

Before he could grasp it, some one yelled, excitedly:

"By thunder, it's Star! Whoop! hurrah! he is safe! By the jumping Jerusalem, this is more than I expected!"

Star recognized Bob Lindsay's voice with a thrill of delight.

The next minute his three friends, with Jim Cole, Bob Bates and four miners from the hollow, were standing around the cart examining his injuries.

Before they reached Wind Hollow they were in possession of all the facts, and an hour later a posse of fifty men was ready to visit the cave.

Not one of them knew that Frank James was there.

They supposed that Jesse, either dead or badly injured, had been carried there by the half-breed, and that the capture of the outlaw would be comparatively easy.

Star was put to bed in one of the shacks, with Nellie Spencer to nurse him.

Mr. Spencer, her father, had gone back to Bear Gulch to report the catastrophe and ask the sheriff at that point to intercede with the governor.

It was his opinion that United States troops would be needed to capture Jesse James. Up to the present time the Sinkerton detectives had not succeeded in bagging him, and they had been chasing the outlaw for years—a fact that justified his theories.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DETECTIVE'S CLEVER TRICK.

But Jesse James was not to be caught napping.

While there was a breath of life in his body his wits were at work, and Star's bullet had only ploughed a hole through his side without doing serious damage.

He found Frank hiding in the cave, and, after a stormy interview, in which Jesse accused him of leaving him to his fate in order to save his own hide, the matter was patched up, and the brothers went on together.

An hour after the meeting at the cave, Jesse James was leading the way around the hills to Wind Hollow.

He felt reasonably sure that the miners would be scouring the hills on his trail before many hours, and he had a reason of his own for wanting to visit the hollow.

Black Bear stalked along between the two brothers.

He knew that Jesse had warned Frank by a look to keep a bead on his heart, and the second greatest outlaw in the world was obeying the warning.

Half-way to the hollow there was a deep ravine.

It was really the dried bed of a mountain torrent which led down to the level country.

As they made their way, single file, between the mountains of rock, Jesse James wheeled suddenly and put the muzzle of his pistol close to the half-breed's temple.

"Now, then, you whelp! talk fast! Where is that box?" he hissed.

The fellow was taken off his guard, and, besides, he saw that Jesse meant business.

"In Walt Whittaker's shack! Under the floor!" he stuttered. As he spoke, he drew a weapon.

Jesse James dropped the hammer of his weapon, and there was a dull report.

Then all the rocks in the ravine seemed to give back the echo.

Frank James dodged back to keep the smoke out of his eyes.

Then he stepped over the dead body of the half-breed and walked on with his brother.

As the posse of miners, headed by the three detectives, made their way out of the hollow, the bandit brothers crouched behind some rocks half-a-mile up the mountain side and watched them curiously.

"They're heading for the cave," chuckled Jesse. "Too bad we ain't near enough to identify the mongrels! I'd feel easier if I knew those three sleuth-hounds were with them."

"You think Star is dead?" asked Frank James, slowly.

Jesse James let out a curse.

"He must be!" he said, coarsely. "I was sure I'd finished him back yonder in the timber. When I saw him at the spring I thought my eyes deceived me! Ha! ha! he'd have to be a good one to live after the dose I gave him! He went down like a log! I'm sure I killed him!"

"Then the others don't count, so let's be moving, Jess," said Frank, promptly.

Jesse James waited until the posse was hidden between the hills, then the two resumed their weary tramp over the rocks to the hollow.

There were only about fifty shacks in the hollow, and there was only one shaft to be seen in the mountains.

Jesse James would never have come to this spot looking for a rich haul, for it was only once in six months that there was money at the hollow.

Then it was either the salaries of the miners, which were paid by a syndicate in St. Louis twice a year, or a strongbox containing funds shipped over the route by Wells-Fargo.

Of these two prizes he had already captured one, and the other, if Black Bear spoke the truth, was waiting at the hollow.

He had opened the letters on the way and extracted the money, but this was only a matter of a couple hundred dollars.

Stopping upon a bluff that overlooked the hollow, the two robbers made a few observations.

Below them in three narrow alleys that did duty as streets, they could see a number of women.

Then Frank James discovered something and called his brother's attention to it.

"The stuff is there, all right, Jess! Walt Whittaker's shack is to the right of the ledge yonder, and I can see what looks like a guard around it."

Jesse James strained his eyes, and saw the sun glinting on what seemed to be rifle barrels.

The sight made him eager to press ahead immediately, for it told him that the coveted ten thousand was really hidden in the shanty.

"There's no use, Jess! It would be madness to attempt it as we are!" went on Frank. "We are both nearly fagged out, and, besides, we need horses. We might steal down and kill the guard, but how would we escape the women?"

Jesse James did some hard thinking, and, as usual, he hit upon a plan.

Five minutes later he had talked Frank over, and the two were hurrying toward the hollow, but keeping out of sight of the natives as much as possible.

There was a strong wind blowing down the mountain side, and the few trees were as dry as tinder.

Just as the women began to disperse to cook their evening meal there was a blaze of fire on four sides of the hollow.

Several piles of timber were scattered near the shacks and the shanties were just dry enough to catch the sparks easily.

A hubbub followed that delighted the souls of the outlaws.

The guard, after a hurried consultation, deserted its post, and rushed to fight the conflagration.

Jesse James had stolen a horse from one of the barns at the first rush of the guard, and Frank was not long in following his example.

Together they dashed up the main alley and dismounted before Walt Whittaker's cabin.

There was not a man on guard, but they were confronted by a woman.

Nellie Spencer had left Star at the first cry of fire, and had just turned the corner of the Whittaker shack when she came face to face with the outlaws.

A cry of horror burst from her lips.

She had recognized them instantly, and half understood the situation.

Jesse James gave her a sharp look, and then raised his weapon.

For the first time in his life he threatened to kill a woman.

There was a report, and a bullet passed the young girl's ear by an inch.

She turned like a deer and darted away, screaming.

"That settles it! The jade will warn the others,

and we'll have a hornet's nest about our ears!" growled the outlaw, furiously.

A great wave of smoke had rolled between them and the little handful of miners who were throwing water on a burning shack, and Jesse James put his shoulder against the door and attempted to open it.

Frank James wheeled his horse and stood guard.

He heard shrieks and cries from the women, and they began pouring out into the alleys.

There were about twenty in all, and they all bore in their arms some of their household treasures.

Just as the door burst open there was a rush of wind through the hollow.

It came from a cut between the rocks and was so sudden and so severe that it took the smoke and fire before it and forced it back up the side of the mountain.

"Hurry, Jess! They're coming!" called Frank James, as he saw the men coming back, and the women dropping their valuables and staring in his direction.

Jesse James came out of the shack with the box under his arm.

In a second he was in the saddle and galloping toward the opposite end of the hollow.

Frank James kept between him and the miners, who had just discovered them, and rode backward on his mount, with a cocked revolver in both hands.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

The men who had held on to their rifles took quick shots at the robbers, but the bullets only whistled about their ears and did no damage.

Cries of "Lynch the rascals! It's the James boys!" came to their ears. The two bandits only laughed and urged their horses to greater speed.

In less than five minutes they were far beyond the reach of the Winchester repeaters.

When they reached the brow of the first hill, Jesse James looked back.

The fire had beaten itself out against the rugged side of the mountain, and there was not so much as a smoke cloud hanging over the hollow.

"The place is properly named! It's a wind hollow, all right!" he chuckled. "Look at the ninnies, Frank! They're gaping after us like so many monkeys!"

"I reckon we made a new sort of whirlwind for

'em," chuckled Frank, as he glanced back. "That was quick work, Jess! Now, if we only have the luck to dodge that posse!"

Jesse James was riding easily with the box in front of him.

A little farther on he stopped and dismounted.

Picking up a large stone, he smashed the box.

A look of chagrin passed over his features. There was nothing in the box but a bundle of blank paper.

On the top of the bundle was a bit of pasteboard.

The words, "Compliments of the Pinkerton Agency," were written on it.

The outlaw's brow grew as black as a thundercloud when he read it, and, as usual, he relieved himself by a volley of curses.

Both Will Star and Black Bear came in for a share of his abuse.

The outlaw knew he had been tricked either by one or both of them.

"By —d! I'll square that, if it costs my life!" he roared, furiously. "Curse the whelps! do they think they can outwit the greatest robber in creation? I'll have that money yet, by the everlasting eternals! and I'll wipe out my score with that sleuth with powder and bullets!"

"But you said he was dead, Jess!" said Frank, after a minute.

Jesse James set his teeth hard and got back into the saddle.

"That job don't look like it! That was one of Star's tricks, as sure as the sun is setting! He's a shrewd one, all right, the shrewdest that ever left Chicago on the track of Jesse James; but I'll outwit him yet! To think of his fooling me, curse him! It was a clever trick to hide an empty box and put a guard around it!"

That explains why they were so ready to desert their post, I reckon," began Frank.

"Bosh! No doubt the sleuthhound was the only one who knew the box was empty! The cur must have the notes in his pockets this minute!"

"Then the white-livered fool you left him with has got them by now," broke in Frank.

Jesse James straightened up, and his features lightened.

"We'll get after that fellow hotfoot," he said, quickly. "He's somewhere near where I left him, if I ain't mistaken. There was only one way for him to get to the hollow, and that was by the mule team.

Reckon they haven't come along, or else we've missed 'em!"

"That's likely the case. Hold on, Jess!" said Frank, sharply; "pull out behind the rocks—there's somebody coming!"

The outlaws had barely secreted themselves behind the rocks, forty paces from the roadway, when a solitary horseman could be seen coming toward them.

The man was dressed in the regulation miner's garb, which consisted of a butternut-colored shirt, a wide hat, heavy boots and leather breeches.

A minute later he was joined by a woman.

He was riding a winded horse that could hardly hobble.

Jesse James said something to Frank, and both men dashed out into the road.

They aimed their pistols at the two riders, and Jesse James gave an order.

"Get down and peel off those togs, you lubber!"

Jesse repeated the order and dropped the hammer of his weapon.

As a bullet whistled by the man's ear, he slid from the saddle and began undressing.

Frank James rode up to the woman and ordered her to dismount.

He would have had her clothing in another minute, if something had not interrupted.

There was a distant clatter of hoofs and a chorus of shouts.

The posse was coming back, and the James boys had either to go back to the hollow, or go forward and face it.

Frank James took a sharp look around.

There was no place to hide, except behind one rock, and that was only large enough to conceal two of the horses.

Jesse James had made one of his lightning changes, and was dressed in the clothing that he had just confiscated.

Pulling a gray beard from one of his pockets, he fastened it over his face, and then pulled the slouch hat down over his eyes.

In this guise, he resembled the miner closely.

A person would have to come nearer than Jesse James ever allowed strangers to come to be able to penetrate the disguise and recognize the outlaw.

As soon as he was ready, he began to issue orders.

When the posse turned the last corner, Frank

James and the man were crouching their horses behind the rock, while Jesse James and the woman were riding slowly toward the hollow.

Jesse had exchanged mounts with the miner for obvious reasons, and the woman was riding her own badly used-up broncho.

CHAPTER VII.

JESSE JAMES AS AN UNDERTAKER.

It was a good thing for the outlaw that dusk was falling.

He was in a ticklish position, and he realized it keenly.

He had to mutter a threat to the woman at his side to make her play her part, which was to make the posse believe the outlaw was her husband.

Behind the rock Frank James was doing a double duty, also.

He was keeping a bead on his companion's heart and at the same time he was trying to identify every man in the posse.

The moment they turned the corner and saw the couple, Bob Lindsay gave a shout:

"Whoop! Halt! Hold on, there!" he yelled. "Where'd you come from, strangers?"

Jesse James turned his head and answered the question:

"Reckon thet thar's none of yer biz, stranger! I 'low, tho', we're on our way ter ther holler! Mebbe one of them thar fellers is ther cuss we're lookin' fer, Sally?"

He turned to the woman as he spoke, and the poor thing nodded her head.

The outlaw's cruel eyes had completely scattered her senses.

"It's Bill Perkins, I reckon!" remarked one of the posse, riding forward. "He's ther undertaker at Wild Horse, ther settlement back yonder, near ther border."

"We'll have need of his services, I reckon, pard," called another of the men. "I'll swear thet thar smoke came straight from ther holler! Thar's been a fire of some sort, or I'm devilish mistaken!"

"We'd best hurry, then. Snakes! s'pose thet thar outlaw has been hyar!" answered the first speaker, as he reined up directly between Jesse James and the woman.

"I was thinking of that! It would be one of his

tricks! That's why I insisted upon the guard around Whittaker's shack," said Lindsay, promptly.

The other men pressed ahead, and were abreast of the rock where Frank James was hiding, and, rather than get out of range of his brother's pistol, Jesse James turned his mount clumsily and jogged back a few paces.

"Thar's been a fire at ther holler, all right, pards," he said, hoarsely. "We seed ther smoke er mile back, didn't we, Sal? I reckon now thar's er shack er two missin', an', if thar's a man er two gone, 'twon't worry me none. Biz is poor over at Wild Hoss, an' me an' Sal are nigh starvin'!"

"Then I reckon you are the sinners that started the fire," growled one of the men. "Keep a bead on 'em, pards, an' set 'em a movin'! If anything's wrong at ther holler, it's time we was down there!"

"Cuss yer! we've jest got hyar!" snarled the outlaw, as a trigger was snapped in his face. "How ther devil could we fire ther holler w'en we ain't so much as sighted it? Keep them thar muzzles outer my face, or I'll do damage, pardners!"

A roar of laughter followed, and the posse spurred up their horses. Lindsay took his place just behind the outlaw, and Jake West kept beside the woman.

"Reckon we'll never git thar, pards, if we let them beasts set ther pace fer us," said the leader of the posse, looking back over his shoulder.

"I 'low we'd best look inter thar credentials an' let 'em come along ter suit themselves! What do yer say ter thet thar arrangement, Mr. Lindsay?"

The detective glanced at the disguised outlaw, and nodded his head.

There was nothing that he could see to arouse his suspicions.

Lindsay's eyes were not like Will Star's, and, besides, he was not so familiar with the bandit's many disguises.

"I'll jist see if he's armed, I guess," he began, moving forward.

There was a crack of a rifle and a bullet struck his arm.

Lindsay pitched head-foremost from the saddle, and his horse, a spirited creature, made a dash forward.

Like a flash, Jesse James leaped from his own beast into the saddle on Lindsay's mount.

At the very same instant he bawled at the woman,

and then emptied the chambers of two seven-shooters in quick succession.

At the same time, the bullets began coming from behind the rock.

Frank James had threatened the miner with instant death if he did not help him, but, in spite of this, the old fellow lowered his aim so as to kill nothing but horses.

The posse was taken by surprise, and when the woman began shooting also they went down like magic.

It was twenty to four, but the outlaws had the advantage

As the last horse fell, carrying its rider with it, the bandit brothers made a dash for liberty.

The miner and his wife had both emptied their weapons, and as the James boys galloped away not a bullet followed them.

Five minutes of hard riding was done before they pulled in their horses.

Then Jesse James leaned low in his saddle and let out a roar of laughter.

"A pretty piece of work, Jess!" said Frank James, admiringly. "I don't see how you managed that jump with such a side as you have got. Better let me take a look at the bandage, hadn't you?"

"No! the rag is all right! Ha! ha! what a victory! I couldn't have done better with the whole James gang behind me! Now, where, the perdition polecats! is that ten thousand dollars?"

"Haven't you given that up yet, Jess?" asked Frank James, anxiously.

Jesse gave him a scornful glance, and answered contemptuously:

"I believe you'd be fool enough to give it up, Frank! Hang it! what did I come here for, if not for that money? If the stuff's in this section, I am going to have it. The thing now is to get my men together. There's four of the gang in Siskiyou, if I can only find them."

"Suppose we go back to the cave and talk it over?"

Jesse James glanced at the sky and shook his head.

"It's too dark for that rough ride, and, besides, I feel dizzy! Reckon you'd better look at that bandage, after all, Frank! I must have opened the wound and did not know it."

Frank James slipped from his saddle and went to his brother.

Jesse was white around the mouth and began to groan terribly.

"It's lucky we've got such a start, Jess," he began. "If the rascals should chase us, we wouldn't be one, two, three in the race. Great snakes! you're bleeding like a pig! Get down, Jess, for a minute."

Jesse James dropped to the ground and sat down upon a stone.

Frank removed a blood-soaked bandage, and then tore his shirt into ribbons.

He had just fastened it in place when they heard a tremendous yelling.

"Quick, Jess! They're after us! Some one has given the alarm," whispered Frank.

Jesse James bent his head and listened a minute.

He felt too weak to ride if he could avoid it.

When he had calculated upon the strength of the posse he made a quick decision.

"Scare the beasts and send 'em ahead!" he ordered. "I'm too weak to ride. I'll have to hide and take chances."

He hit his horse a ringing blow as he spoke, and the animal darted off like the wind.

Frank James did the same, and the second animal leaped ahead snorting.

Then the two brothers crept into the rocks and bushes twenty feet from the road.

They were hidden securely, and the darkness aided them.

They reloaded their weapons and then waited breathlessly.

A minute later six men rode by. The James boys let them pass, rather than miss one in the darkness.

"I heard that fellow Lindsay's voice, so we didn't kill him," muttered Frank, after they were at a safe distance.

"And I recognized West and that fellow Ray," answered Jesse. "They're hard to kill, curse them!"

"Exactly what they think of us, I reckon," chuckled Frank.

Jesse James listened a minute longer, and then assumed an easier position.

"I'll rest a while, I guess," he said, after a minute. "Those curs are likely to go on as long as they hear the horses ahead of them! Snakes! wouldn't it be great if we could have another look into the hollow? That money is there somewhere, just as sure as shooting!"

"And there can't be much left in the way of law

and order," added Frank. "They're probably carrying on like a pack of mad hyenas now! If it wasn't for your side, I'd be willing to risk it."

"Bosh! my side is well enough. I'll be ready to start in a minute!"

There was another brief silence, and then Jesse James crept out into the road.

Ten minutes later the brothers were on the bluff looking down into the hollow.

Jesse James had decided to risk his life again for ten thousand dollars.

Below them a dozen or more pine torches were flaring.

They could tell by this that the settlement was up in arms, but these symptoms did not deter the James boys an instant.

They had counted a dozen dead horses along the way, but there was not a corpse to tell of their victory.

These had either been hidden in the bushes or carried to the hollow.

They began to think they had not done as much damage as they fancied.

It was a relief to Frank James to know it, but Jesse was indifferent.

He would not have cared in his present mood if he had wiped out the hollow.

The outlaw discarded his gray whiskers and turned his coat wrong side out.

It was the best he could do to alter his appearance, and he merely did it from force of habit.

Keeping in the shadow of the rocks and trees, they made their way down to the hollow.

Frank James kept looking behind and listening for the posse, while Jesse started ahead, on the lookout for a sentry.

They did not meet a soul until they were within a dozen rods of the first group of shanties.

Then Jesse James stumbled over a man lying in the road.

He saw at a glance the fellow was dying. "Snakes! if it ain't the white-livered son-of-a-gun!" hissed the outlaw.

The next second he had Barnes by the shoulder, and was shaking him.

"Let him alone, Jess! The fellow is dying!" warned Frank.

Jesse James leaned over and put his lips to the dying man's ear.

"Tell me what was done with the ten thousand in banknotes, and I'll save your life," he said, in a sharp whisper.

Barnes opened his eyes.

He had been shot during the fracas upon the hill, but had said nothing about his wound and started out the second time with the posse.

He had turned back at the last minute, and fallen from his horse.

When Jesse James spoke to him, he was almost delirious.

In a choking gasp he answered the question:

"The detective, Will Star—he has it, I reckon!"

Jesse James was furious in a second.

"Where is he?" he began.

Barnes shook his head, and turned the color of ashes.

He had breathed his last a second later.

So the cur is alive, after all!" muttered Jesse James, as he rose to his feet. "Then, by the eternals, I'm glad I came back! There are two prizes to win in this cursed hollow! I'll never leave it till I see him dead, and have my clutches on that money."

Frank James did not answer, for he could hear men and women coming.

He flattened himself out upon a pile of timber, while Jesse stole into a shed and crouched between two winded horses.

A moment later two women came out of the nearest shanty.

The light from a torch fell on their faces, and both bandits recognized one of them as Nellie Spencer.

The young girl was weeping, and held a handkerchief to her eyes.

In a high-pitched voice the other woman endeavored to soothe her.

"I reckon he's better off! 'Tain't much fun fer a young feller like him ter be a-chasin' rascals! Dear me! I hope they'll ketch ther murderin' robbers his time fer sartin!"

Jesse James pricked up his ears, and the blood leaped through his veins.

He could hardly keep from shouting when he heard Miss Spencer's answer:

"Poor Mr. Star! he was the cleverest man on the prce, they say! Oh! if Jesse James should kill my over, it would drive me crazy!"

There was a burst of tears, and the two women disappeared.

Jesse James took his life in his hands by leaving the shed and skulking over behind the pile of timber.

"Did you hear that, Frank? That sleuth, Will Star, is dead! There's a chance, and a good one, to get that money!"

"You think he has it on his person?" asked Frank.

"Sure; and the corpse is in that shack, if I'm not mistaken."

"Then I'll go in and have a look at it," began Frank, with a movement to slide down from the timber.

There was a chorus of yells, and a dozen men came toward the shanty.

They swung their torches so that the blaze lit up the timber, and the outlaws did not dare to breathe for a minute.

"Safe!" whispered Jesse, as the crowd filed into the shanty. "Come, Frank, 'we've got to go easy, I see! We'll wait til they've paid their respects to the dead, and then——"

The sentence ended by Frank stepping upon his shoulder.

A second later they were crouching in the shed, waiting for the next move in the diabolical game they were playing.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESSE JAMES' GREATEST DEED.

The return of the posse, bringing in the two riderless horses, was the next occurrence.

As they swept by the shed where the outlaws were hiding, Miss Spencer opened the door again, and gave a scream of pleasure.

Lindsay sprang from his saddle and took her in his arms.

As she laid her head upon his shoulder, the young girl whispered something which made the brave detective shiver like an aspen.

"My God! Star is dead!" he cried out, in a hoarse whisper.

Instantly Star's two friends, Jake West and Ned Ray, dropped from their saddles.

"Curse that scoundrel, Jesse James! it was his bullets that killed him!" cried West. "That makes one more reason why we should hunt the rascal down, and I take oath right here to track him to

cover! The fiend must die! He is a curse upon God's footstool!"

"Aye, that's what he is!" growled one of the men; then the entire posse dismounted and filed into the shanty.

"Now's our chance, Jess! Shall we steal a couple of horses and bolt?" whispered Frank James, softly.

There was a low curse, and Jesse James rested his hand upon his brother's shoulder.

"No, by the eternals! The cuss is dead and he has got the money! I'll take another chance before I run from the mongrels!"

"It's foolhardy, Jess! There's half-a-hundred of them," began his brother.

"A half-a-thousand would not stop me! See, they are leaving the shack! In a minute they'll be plotting and planning what to do next, and, as like as not, the body of the sleuthhound will be left with the women."

"And would you rob the dead, Jess? I'm not over-particular, but it's a creepy thing to do, and——"

Jesse James came near giving vent to laughter.

"You're a fool, I believe!" he growled, under his breath.

A flash of light from a torch came within ten feet of him at that minute, and the outlaw slunk farther into the inky darkness between the horses.

An hour passed, in which the entire settlement seemed upon the move.

The alleys were being patrolled by mounted men, and there was a constant moving in and out of the shanty which held the detective's dead body.

The bandit brothers were hemmed in by the torches.

A move from their hiding-place would discover them to the miners, and they were in constant expectation of some one coming to look at the horses.

An hour after midnight the settlement grew quiet, but this did not mean that the guard had been abandoned.

Every available man in the hollow was in the streets, armed to the teeth and on the lookout for trouble.

The shanty was finally left alone, except for one man who patrolled it, armed with a Winchester repeater.

As he passed through a glare of light on his journey around the shanty, Jesse James recognized the

detective, Ned Ray, who was Star's dearest friend and companion.

He waited until the majority of the miners had assembled before a shanty a few rods distant, then, drawing a keen knife from his bootleg, he crept out toward Ray's line of march.

As the detective came in view again, something whizzed through the air.

Ray caught the flash of the keen blade and jumped to one side. The knife struck him on the shoulder and sank deep into the flesh.

The detective let out a yell of pain, and then blazed away with his repeater.

"Quick, Frank! stand guard at the window! I've got a minute, at any rate!" called the outlaw, softly.

His plans had failed, but he was not to be thwarted.

He had expected that Ray would fall without a sound, but the fact that the whole settlement had been warned only fired his blood with fury.

He raised the sash of a low window and leaped into the shanty.

There was time to lower the sash behind him, and at that minute Frank James dropped the detective with a bullet and darted for the timber.

A rush followed Ray's cry, and, as Jesse James bent over the detective's coffin, he knew by the sounds that the house was being surrounded.

Something had to be done, and it was for him to do it.

As usual, his wits worked best when he was in the most dangerous predicament.

He raised Star's body, and a low cry escaped his lips.

There was a large package of bills under the detective's shoulders, and the outlaw was not a second in grasping the situation.

"Ha! ha! they were going to ship the money with the remains!" he hissed, between his teeth. "I reckon they thought the stuff would be safe in a detective's coffin!"

He lifted the detective out as he spoke and laid him on a table, just as a dozen shoulders were placed against the door of the shanty.

There was a pile of brush in one corner to be used for firewood.

Jesse James touched a match to it and then crawled into the coffin.

He let the cover fall into place just as the door was burst from its hinges.

A blaze of fire greeted the men as they poured into the room.

A lot of women's clothing had ignited and was burning furiously, and in a second the fire had spread to the walls and roof of the shanty.

"Quick! the coffin, boys!" yelled Jake West, and a dozen hands reached for the pine casket that they all believed contained the body of the detective.

The fire roared about them, but the men stuck to their task.

They had just set the coffin on the ground forty feet from the burning shanty, when Star was seen in the blaze alive!

A shout went up that echoed through the hollow.

There was another heroic attempt, and the detective was brought out, the miners minus their hair and eyebrows, and their faces scorched and disfigured. He had not been dead, but in a trance, and the rough handling and heat had resuscitated him.

There was a rush for the coffin.

When they tore off the cover they found it empty.

There was not a sign of a banknote left under the lining.

The pandemonium that followed was not to be described by words.

Men turned to maniacs as they rushed hither and thither, and Jesse James would have fared hard if he had been found in the hollow.

In the midst of the excitement a posse of fifty horsemen clattered down the hill.

It was headed by Colonel Hank Spencer, and the sheriff of Siskiyou County was one of the number.

A thorough search was made for Jesse James, but the sun rose without a trace being found of him.

The clever bandit had escaped from their clutches, and, moreover, he had vanished with the ten thousand dollars.

This was perhaps the cleverest feat ever performed by Jesse James, and it wove about his name a fresh garland of honor.

Will Star, the brave detective, was nursed back to health again, and, with the other three detectives, only waited to recover from his wounds before he went on with the work of tracking the James boys to cover.

While Lindsay was recovering from his wounds,

he made good use of his time, and a month or two later he married Miss Spencer.

Ned Ray hovered between life and death for nearly three weeks, but finally recovered both his health and spirits.

The adventures of Jesse James in Siskiyou County were spread from East to West, until the whole United States throbbed with indignation against him.

Rewards were doubled, and even trebled, and every detective agency west of the Mississippi had men on the trail of the famous outlaws.

Jim Cole and Bob Bates went back to the stage route, and for years they were on the lookout for Jesse James. Every passenger over the line was treated with suspicion until the two men were sure they were not the famous road agents.

Colonel Spencer never recovered the valuables he had lost, but his fate was the fate of many another.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 48) will contain "The James Boys' Steamboat; or, The River Cruise of the Bandit Brothers." It tells how Jesse James won twenty thousand dollars in a prize fight. One of the most exciting periods of his life will be dealt with. Look out for it, boys.

LETTER FROM A PRIZE WINNER.

Here's a letter from George Nordlin a worthy member of the great band of boys who read the Jesse James Weekly. He won a prize in the last contest—a camera. Here's what he has to say about it.

ST. PAUL, MINN.

Messrs. Street & Smith, New York—

Dear Sirs: The camera you sent me came as a pleasant surprise. It is all and more than you represented it to be. I am unable to fully express my sincere thanks on paper. Considering the splendid articles that were sent in, I feel especially honored to have a first prize given to my own little effort. Street & Smith certainly keep their promises, even though they have made some pretty large ones lately. Whenever I get a chance to say a word for them I shall certainly do so.

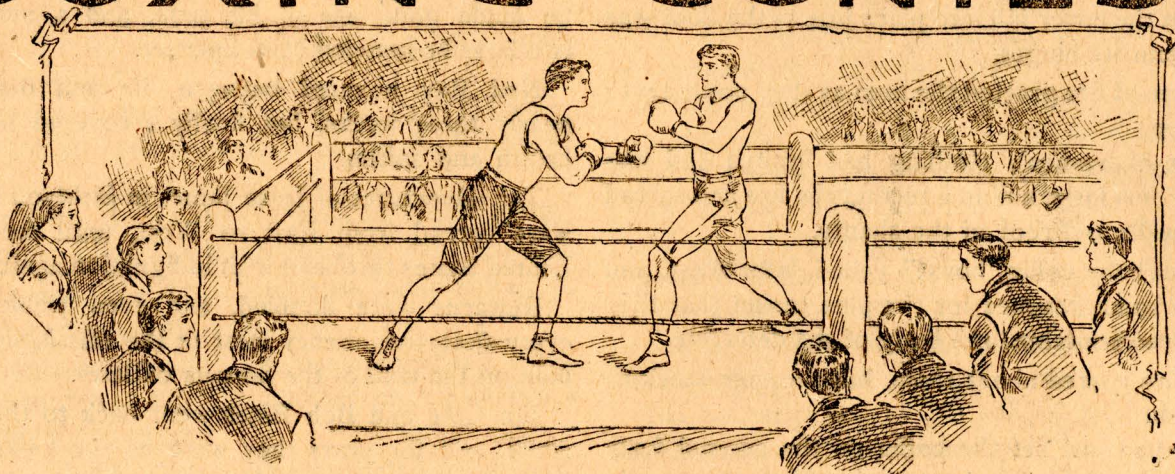
Wishing a long life to the Jesse James Weekly and all your other publications, I remain,

Yours respectfully,

GEORGE NORDLIN.

Thanks for the good wishes, George. You deserved the prize, as all who read your story will agree, even if you are modest about it. We want friends just such as you and we wish you the best of luck with your camera.

BOXING CONTEST



A lively pace you're setting, boys.

Plenty of upper-cuts and left leads flying about the editor's head in the shape of good boxing stories.

The more the merrier. Send them right along.

Full particulars of contest on page 31.

An Interrupted Match.

(By John Walker, Ohio.)

It was about seven months ago when J. Jones, A. Moran, H. Anderson and myself were going out to the woods when we saw J. Martin and M. Roma fighting on the street.

We came up to them and asked them if they were satisfied to have it out with boxing gloves, and they said, "Yes."

So we went into an old house and Jones got the boxing gloves, and then they started boxing.

Roma was sixteen years old, while Martin was half a year younger. Roma was heavier than Martin, but Martin knew how to box better than Roma.

Roma chased Martin all over the room, which was 20x15 feet, and Moran and Jones started laughing at Martin, but Martin knew what he was doing, because Roma was heavier and got tired sooner.

Then suddenly Martin led with his left for Roma's face, but Roma was on his guard and put his right up and Martin's left struck Roma's right hand. But at the same time Roma struck Martin in the face with his left hand, which caught Martin on the nose and made it bleed.

Martin struck Roma between the eyes, which made Roma stagger toward the wall.

Then Roma hit Martin on the ear, but at the same time Martin struck Roma over the heart, which made him stagger again, but Roma was not going to give up so easy, and he rushed at Martin again.

Martin ducked and hit Roma in the eye.

At the same time Roma gave Martin an uppercut that put Martin on his knees.

When Martin got up Roma started chasing Martin again, and got him in a corner, and made a blow at his face, but Martin slipped under his arm, and as soon as Roma turned around Martin landed on Roma's nose, and made it bleed.

Roma then hit Martin on the ear. That sent him on his knees again, but he was up in a second, and just as Roma made a blow at Martin's heart he blocked the blow with his left hand and landed with his right on Roma's eye.

Roma then made a punch at Martin's face, but Martin stepped aside, and Roma's left hand passed harmless over his shoulder.

Martin then made a punch at Roma's heart, and Roma guarded the blow with his left hand and struck Martin with his right in the face, before he could block it.

Martin then went with his right at Roma's face. He stepped aside and hit Martin with the left, an uppercut.

Martin lead with his right for Roma's face, and as Roma's left went to block the blow, Martin hit Roma over the heart.

Roma was going to clinch and Martin got in an uppercut.

I then saw a policeman coming, so we jumped from the window and came to a creek, where the boys washed themselves.

A Three-Round Bout.

(By Chas. Rogers, N. Y.)

Before the Horton law which prohibited boxing in New York State there were some lively bouts for boys held in the Sampson Athletic Club of Brooklyn.

One of the bouts I remember witnessing was between Perry Benzie and Bob Williams.

Perry was a lad of eighteen while Bob had just passed his seventeenth year.

Bob entered the ring first, shortly followed by Perry, and both took their corners, and were being rubbed down when the referee called them to the center of the ring.

They listened to the rules and returned to their cor-

ners, and when the gong sounded all but the fighters and referee were out of the ring in quick order.

Round One.

Perry makes a wild rush, which Bob quickly stops with a right to the stomach. They clinch, and Perry puts his right to the eye and nose.

Bob is stunned, and it seemed as if he was doomed, when he gains his wind and upper-cuts to nose and stomach.

Perry jolts his left to ear, followed by right, which is blocked by Bob, who, in return, shifts his right to Perry's jaw at the sound of the gong.

Round Two.

Perry counters with right and left. Bob is wild and swings right and left, but is wakened up with a stiff right to nose, which draws the first blood. He chops a hard left to Perry's eye, and, in return, receives a jolt on the jaw, which knocks him to the floor.

He is saved by the sound of the gong.

Round Three.

Bob begins to dance around the ring in Corbett's style, but is quickly stopped by a right and left to each side of jaw. This makes him wild, and he sends a wild right, which is blocked, and receives a well-planted jaw breaker, which knocks him senseless.

He is counted out.

The bout was on account of a girl whom both boxers loved, and a side bet of ten dollars.

Boxing on the Levee.

(By Philip Fruthaler, La.)

One Saturday evening, in the latter part of January, a number of young men were gathered together in an old stable on the levee front, as there was to be a five-round boxing match between Kid Hurdy and Bill Camden.

The people were growing restless when the referee entered the ring and started the ball a-rolling.

Hurdy opened things up with a left swing to jaw. He then tried for a body blow, but was blocked by Camden, who sent a vicious swing to Hurdy's nose, which drew blood, but this did not stop him, for he shot one in on Camden's neck, which sent him up against the ropes. Camden recovered himself quickly and sent a hot one to Hurdy's jaw, and both men were in a clinch when the bell rang.

Camden opened up things in the second with a light tap on Hurdy's jaw. He tried an uppercut, but in this he was too slow, for Hurdy blocked him and rushed him to the ropes. Camden clinched and saved himself. Hurdy then started to tantalize Camden with right hooks to the face and body when the bell rang.

In the third Hurdy tried for the head, but fell short. Camden rushed Hurdy, and sent him to the floor with an uppercut. Hurdy jumped up and rushed Camden, who sidestepped and caught Hurdy a blow on the nose which started to bleed again. Hurdy clinched, and in the breakaway he landed on Camden's body and both were fighting hard when the bell rang.

The fourth opened up with Camden sending a hot one to the body. Hurdy tried a right for head, but was blocked, and in a mixup Hurdy sent his right to body

and left to face. They played around the ring for a while when Hurdy saw an opening and sent his glove into Camden's face and followed this up with a left swing to body, which sent Camden against the ropes. Camden fought his way clear and sent a light one to the neck, he then tried for the face. Hurdy ducked and hit Camden over the eye, splitting it. It would have been all up with him had not the bell rang just then.

The two men came up for the last round very groggy. Camden tried for body, but fell short. He tried another, which was blocked by Hurdy, who sent in an uppercut which came near putting Camden out of the business. Camden was game and went for his man again. Hurdy knocked him away. He came again and tried a swing for Hurdy's jaw, which Hurdy sidestepped, and sent a hard right to the head, which sent Camden down and out of the business.

Counting the Blows.

(By Chas. Frankenger, N. Y.)

The two boxers put on their gloves and stood in an erect position, then they shook hands with each other and began hitting right and left.

The first blow hit one of the boxers—A.—right along-side of his chin, and the second blow hit right below the heart, and the third blow was a swing with the right hand to hit A. on his face, but B. was not quick enough, so that A. dodged it.

The fourth blow hit B. in the chin. The fifth blow was guarded by B.'s right hand, so A. made a false hit.

Then came a clinch, so that the referee had to go and separate the boxers. He got hit at the same time.

The seventh blow was one right above the waist, which made B. a little weak. He said he would not give it up yet, however, so he had to rest for about five minutes to catch his breath.

Then when they started to box again it went so hot and heavy that you could not see whether they were hitting each other or not, so that the men and boys that were standing around were laughing to beat the band. When they finished the fight they had a good rub-down with alcohol. Then they took a good bath and dressed themselves to go home, and on the next morning one of the fellows was so hoarse that he could hardly speak.

You must have quick eyes and a good memory, Charlie, to see all the blows as they were struck and remember them.

Two Good Contests.

(By B. Boyle, Pa.)

Contest No. 1.—short but lively.

This contest was between Young Foster and "Mid-get" Preston, both of Philadelphia. It lasted half a round.

At referee's word both arose and shook hands at sound of gong.

Foster landed a right arm jolt on Preston's jaw. Preston struggled to his feet and landed a left hook on Foster's jaw.

Foster got up and with a left-hand swing put Preston down and out.

Contest No. 2.—This contest was between Tommy Markee and Jim Sullivan, both of Philadelphia and lasted three rounds.

Round One.

Both fiddled for an opening. Markee lands on Sullivan's head with a left. Sullivan counters with a right on Markee's chest. Markee comes at Sullivan with a right and left on head.

Sullivan takes the count, Sullivan is groggy and hugs till the round is ended.

Round Two.

Markee opens with a left hook on the chest. Sullivan clinches to save himself. Markee feints for the heart. Sullivan lands on Markee's jaw with a right hook. Markee looks groggy.

Markee recovers and walks into a right jab.

Both are fighting close with short jabs on stomach and chest.

Round Three.

Sullivan opens with a wild swing for Markee's head. Markee returns with a straight left and follows Sullivan into his corner, and with three rights and lefts on head puts Sullivan down and out.

The Great Match.

(By B. G. Hickman, Hawarden, Iowa.)

There was excitement in the little town of Jaspar, especially among the boys.

Jaspar had been making rapid strides in athletics, and it was the custom to have a High School Tournament or Field Meet annually.

The chief attraction this year, for the tournament was near at hand, was to be a boxing match between Joe Egelson, familiarly known as the "Slugger," and Jack Watson, a fine, manly boy, who lived with his widowed mother on the outskirts of the village.

The people of the town had offered a prize of fifty dollars and a gold medal to the winner.

Jack was very anxious to win the prize, for the last installment on the mortgage would soon be due, and unless they could pay it his mother and himself would be forced to leave the neat little cottage they had so long called their own.

Tournament day dawned bright and clear, and by three o'clock in the afternoon 5000 people had collected at the grounds to witness the great match.

A platform had been erected near the grandstand, so the young antagonists would be in plain view of the audience.

At last the boxers made their appearance, and were greeted with shouts by the people. The "Slugger" was a short, heavily-built fellow, about eighteen years of age, and he had a determined, almost brutal look on his face.

Jack Watson was two years younger than his opponent. He weighed twenty pounds less, but his slender, athletic figure showed great quickness and power.

He had a marvelous way of keeping his feet, one essential of a good boxer. The contestants advanced to the center of the ring, shook hands and "squared off."

The whistle sounded and the fight was on.

The Slugger hit mostly for the face, but the nervous movement of his elbows, as he retired to his corner showed that Jack's body blows were telling.

In the second round the Slugger opened by sending his right for the jaw, but Jack cleverly parried and returned a jab on the wind. In the third round, Jack received a blow on the chest which brought him to his knees, and while attempting to recover, the Slugger closed and landed an uppercut which knocked his opponent to the ropes.

Slowly came the referee's count. One, two, three, four, five, six——

Jack had risen to his feet, and although swaying unsteadily and looking dazed, he was as game as ever.

In the fourth round he completely changed his tactics, and had the Slugger following him around the ring continuously.

The next round found Jack comparatively fresh, and his antagonist's wind rapidly failing.

The Slugger knew that if he did not do something quickly he would be winded, so he made a rush for Jack, intending to settle him then and there.

But Jack leaped nimbly aside and hit for the neck.

The blow landed squarely over the jugular, and having all the weight and force of the body behind it, the Slugger was stretched on the platform.

It was a "finishing" blow, and amid the yells of the spectators he was slowly counted out. That night Jack placed the prize money in his mother's hand.

"My son, you have saved our home," she said, and there were tears in her eyes as she spoke.

The Young Boxers.

(By Henry Lins, N. J.)

On a bright sunny day the two boys known as "The Young Boxers" started from their homes to box for a prize.

They came into the ring, shook hands and the referee gave the signal and Frank caught Jim on the eye. Jim aimed a blow at Frank's chest, but Frank wanged in with his right and gave him an uppercut, catching him on the chin.

Wang! went Jim's left in Frank's eye, and his right landed on his arm. Frank tried to hit Jim with his left, but Jim dodged it, and landed an awful one on Frank's chest, and Frank went down.

In they came again. The signal sounded and Jim gave Frank one in the ear. Frank hit at the wind with his left. Jim fell, but was up in a moment, and hit left and right.

Frank felt a whack each time, when he got red in the face and hit Jim on the chin, while Jim caught him square in the nose, which soon began to bleed. Frank got mad and he soaked Jim in the side of the head and gave him an uppercut in the chin.

Frank went down at a blow Jim gave him on the head with his right. Jim ran over to hit him and stumbled over him and fell. Frank saw his chance and soaked Jim one on the ear and nose, and with an uppercut caught him in the face.

Jim's right landed on Frank's face. Frank's left hit the air, and Jim dodged Frank's right, which was aimed at him, while his right hit him plump on the head.

Frank's right shot on Jim's shoulder, and Jim jumped to one side, and when Frank came up to hit him he hit him on the ear. But out shot Frank's left, right in Jim's face with such force that Jim fell.

EXCITING ADVENTURES.

GENTLEMAN JACK, THE OUTLAW.

By WILLIAM H. LILLIS.

It was with a sensation of supreme joy that Frank Greyling left grim old Mr. Raynor's private office. When he entered it half an hour before he had no expectation that his whole future career was to be affected by the interview, but now he left it feeling assured that his life was drifting toward a brighter and broader channel.

To be favored by such a sour old gentleman as Mr. Raynor was a piece of good luck, and Frank Greyling had indeed been favored. He was only a poor clerk in the banking house of Samuel Raynor, and when he was summoned before that gentleman his surprise can be imagined when a subject was broached that made him feel that a high honor had been paid him.

The conversation that ensued was to this effect: A large, productive mining claim in Colorado had fallen under the notice of Mr. Raynor. It was for sale, and he had determined to buy it. But in those days—for our story treats of events of years ago—mails and similar accommodations were irregular and unsafe, and he had disliked to conduct any negotiations through such mediums; so it was necessary to send a trusted agent to purchase the mine. The young man received his instructions, and was ordered to start on his journey the next night. He was given a large amount of money with which to make the purchase—real money, too, for checks or drafts would probably be declined in the isolated district that he was to visit.

It was several weeks before Greyling, traveling by the tedious coaches that existed in those days, arrived in Colorado, but at last, one June evening, he found himself standing before a rudely constructed two-story inn, about thirty miles from his destination.

While awaiting the stage coach at this point, Greyling received information which made him rather uneasy. This information related to the exploits of a noted road-agent, known as Gentleman Jack, who had been a terror to timid travelers in that part of the country.

The driver of the stage coach which left the little Colorado inn that night did not seem a person to invite confidence; and as Greyling was the only traveler from this point, his reflections were not very cheerful.

The vehicle had kept the main road, and was laboring along a rocky lane that led through a dense forest, when an alarming incident occurred. A large stone crashed

through the stage lamp, sending the shattered glass in all directions. Before Greyling could recover from his astonishment, for midnight darkness put everything in gloom, he felt himself jerked from the stage, and in a moment more sank to the ground unconscious, from a violent blow on the head.

He was in the hands of Gentleman Jack, who had struck him senseless with the butt of his pistol.

When Greyling came to his senses he was in a rude chamber in the outlaw's dwelling, whither he had been conveyed by the outlaw's confederates, and he had been searched and plundered.

It would be difficult to portray the tide of emotions that surged through his soul as he lay in that darkened chamber upon the hard floor where the outlaws had thrown him. All his bright thoughts—all the hopes of a brilliant future were now things of the past. Before him was naught but disgrace, for what would his employer think of him for having permitted himself to be robbed?

His painful reflections were forced to give way to the realities of the present when he heard the key turned in the lock. A stream of light flashed into the room, and he observed some one enter.

For an instant he thought that he was dreaming—that the beautiful being who entered the room was but a creature of his imagination, but that idea was dispelled when she spoke.

"I have come to save you," murmured the intruder, a beautiful girl.

The young man gazed in enraptured silence on the girl's radiant eyes and wealth of golden hair. He seemed spellbound by the beauty of her face and the shapeliness of her form. She could not have been more than seventeen, and her attractiveness was increased tenfold in Greyling's eyes by the comparison between her and her surroundings.

"I have come to save you," she repeated, raising the lamp that she held on a line with her head, so that she could command a better view of him.

"Why do you take the trouble?" Greyling asked, getting on his feet.

"Because I must not allow a human being to die. I must do something to counteract the wickedness of this house," the fair girl replied, a shade of sadness clouding her face.

"Who are you?"

"Ah, when you know who I am, you will look on me with suspicion, for, alas! I am the daughter of the man who has doomed you to die!"

"Impossible!" said Greyling, astonished that a scoundrel like Gentleman Jack should be blessed with such a child—such a vision of loveliness.

"Alas! it is true. Oh, but how I hate this life! How I shudder when I think that I am the child of that man! How his iniquities cause the blush of shame to continually surge into my face," and the speaker's voice trembled, and tears came into the beautiful eyes.

"Why do you not leave him?"

"Because I dare not. Where could I go? And then, though I do not love him, he is my parent, and no matter how low he may have fallen, it is my duty to remain beside him."

He was struck with the sincerity of the girl's words. It was singular that she, living amid a life of crime, should retain all her innocence, and the qualities of a Christian heart. He remarked that she spoke as fluently and with as much culture as a New York belle.

"And you have come to save me?" he asked.

"Yes, and you must lose no time in leaving this place."

"Where is your father?"

"In the room below, with a few of his men."

"Miss, I shall not leave this house until I recover my money."

Greyling was determined to recover his money, so he gave no attention to the girl's remarks, but moved toward the door, and cautiously made his way to the floor below. The girl followed, urging him to give no thought to the money, but he was firm in his purpose.

The light of the lamp showed him the door leading into the room. First possessing himself of a loaded rifle which stood in the hall, he opened the door and entered.

Three men, in addition to Gentleman Jack, were sitting in the room.

They sprang up and glanced at him threateningly and he returned the glance in the same spirit.

"I demand my money," Greyling said.

"You fool!" hissed Gentleman Jack; and he rushed at Greyling.

The young man raised the rifle and covered Gentleman Jack.

The outlaw paused. His followers gazed on sullenly, not daring to draw a weapon while the young man held the rifle in their direction.

"Give me my wallet!" he cried.

With a bitter curse, Gentleman Jack drew the wallet from his breast and threw it at the young man's feet.

The latter, for the moment, forgot his caution, for he lowered the rifle and stooped down and grasped the wallet, and as he arose Gentleman Jack aimed a fearful blow at his neck.

Greyling adroitly moved aside, and the blow only fell lightly on his shoulder.

"Ha!" he cried. "You would be treacherous," and the outlaw, who had all but lost his equilibrium, received a blow between the eyes before he could recover himself.

He fell backward to the floor, and his followers, overcoming their fear, rushed at Greyling.

He shoved the wallet into his pocket, and raising the rifle to his shoulder he took aim at the foremost man and fired. The man fell, mortally wounded, and the other two paused.

Taking advantage of this, Greyling dropped his weapon and made for the door.

The outlaw's daughter, hidden by the door, had witnessed all, and as Greyling rushed into the hall she exclaimed:

"Quick! There are more outlaws in the house, and if you remain here another instant you will be captured. Follow me," and clutching his arm, she led him to a door at the end of the hall. She opened it, and, followed by Greyling, stepped out into the woods.

Evidently the girl's words were true, and the house was full of outlaws, for he heard numerous voices, among them Gentleman Jack's, and then the rush of many feet; so slamming the door to, he cried to the girl:

"You must come with me. These men will punish you for releasing me."

"I will go with you," she replied. "I would not dare remain after what has occurred."

So deep was the darkness that the young man could not perceive his companion, so, allowing her to retain hold of his arm, he followed where she led him.

The next instant he found himself amid bushes, tantalizing branches, sticking in his face and hands—led on by his fair friend.

"They are following us," he murmured, as the bushes behind them cracked and snapped.

Nearer and nearer his pursuers were approaching and they seemed within a few feet of him when his companion exclaimed:

"Here is the road!"

Was he safe now? he asked himself, as he stepped upon a broad, even road. Would Gentleman Jack and his band follow him there?

"Now we will have no trouble in avoiding our enemies," the girl said.

"Won't you, though!" exclaimed a voice from the path they had issued from, and in an instant Gentleman Jack and his men confronted them.

"Oh, father," cried the beautiful girl, "spare this man!"

"Never!" replied the outlaw, and drawing a bowie-knife from his belt he rushed at Greyling.

In another second of time the knife would have been buried in the young man's body, but ere the outlaw could accomplish his fatal design there was the report of a rifle, and Gentleman Jack fell back with a bullet in his lungs.

There was the tramping of many feet, the sound of voices, and from the other side of the road appeared a body of men wearing the uniform of the United States army, and before the outlaws could recover from their surprise they were prisoners.

Greyling was amazed at the turn affairs had taken, and he had not yet regained his composure when the commander of the soldiers, a handsome man, his features clouded with a settled sadness, laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"We arrived at the right moment, didn't we?" he said to Greyling.

"You did," responded the young man, gratefully. "You saved my life. Can I have the honor of knowing the name of my preserver?"

"I am Colonel Williston, and you——"

"I am Frank Greyling, of New York."

"Well, Mr. Greyling," said Colonel Williston, "for the past week I have been searching for an outlaw styling himself Gentleman Jack——"

"This is the man," interrupted Greyling, pointing to where the outlaw lay upon the ground writhing in dire agony.

A look of pleasure swept over the colonel's face, and he glanced at the fallen man. No sooner did he look than his face became as pale as death.

"Great Heaven!" he cried. "Edward Prentice!"

At the sound of that name Gentleman Jack raised his head and glanced around.

"Who calls me Edward Prentice?" he cried.

"I do!" replied the colonel, rushing to him and dropping on his knees beside him. "Wretch, where is my daughter?—the child that you stole from me so long ago?"

Death had nearly claimed the outlaw's soul, and at the colonel's words he shuddered. The blood rushed up from his lungs, but he succeeded in speaking.

"Forgive me!" he pleaded, piteously. "Forgive me! There is your child."

The dying outlaw raised himself and pointed to the beautiful girl who had befriended Greyling.

She had witnessed the exciting proceedings in amazed silence, but at Gentleman Jack's words she rushed to his side, crying:

"Is it true? Am I not your child?"

"No, you are not my child!" he replied. "This soldier is your father," pointing to Williston.

"My daughter!" the colonel joyfully cried, and springing to his feet, he embraced the girl.

Greyling stood by, witnessing this dramatic episode in silence.

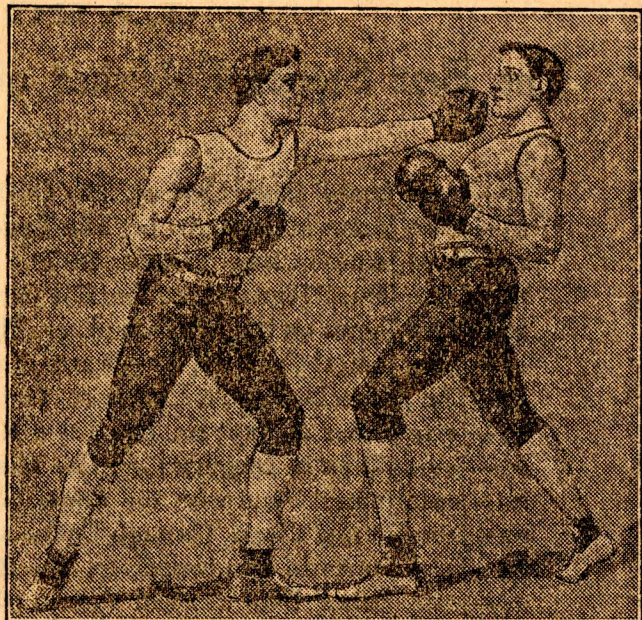
"I am dying," cried the outlaw. "I have at times thought of my wickedness, and determined to repent, and now, as my life blood is gradually flowing away, remorse clutches at my heart, and I think with horror of my lawless career. Twenty years ago," and the man appeared to be addressing Greyling. "I was a well-to-do man, residing in New York. I fell in love with a beautiful young woman.

"I loved and lost! Leonie Elwin preferred the love of Charles Williston to mine, and he won her.

"They were married, but my hatred for the man who had won the girl I loved became so intense that I determined to have revenge. I waited for years, but I obtained it at last. When their child was born, and I observed how Williston idolized it, I saw a way of rending his heart with anguish, and when the child—the beautiful girl before me—was a year old I stole her from her parents and concealed her. Somehow, they learned that I was the kidnaper, and I was hounded by the officers of the law, and at last it was necessary for me to fly to the West with the child, where I have since remained, leading a life of crime.

Our story has quite a romantic sequel. Colonel Williston's daughter was named Leonie, after her mother, and Frank Greyling formed an attachment for her that soon grew into passionate love, and as Leonie's feelings toward him were of a similar nature, it was not long before they were married.

Boxing Contest Now Running



SEVENTEEN PRIZES

TWO **SPALDING PUNCHING BAGS** COMPLETE
FIRST-CLASS **OUTFIT**

FIFTEEN **SPALDING BOXING GLOVES**
SETS OF

The two boys who write the best stories will each receive a Spalding "Expert" Punching Bag, made of finest selected Napa tan leather. The workmanship is the same as in the Fitzsimmons special bag. Double-stitched, welted seams, re-inforced one-piece top. Best quality Para rubber bladder. An extremely durable and lively bag, and carefully selected before packing. Each bag complete in box with bladder, rubber cord for floor and rope for ceiling attachment. The four next best stories will win for their writers sets of Spalding regulation 5 oz. boxing gloves.

TWO PAIRS OF GLOVES TO EACH SET.

Made after the Corbett pattern of soft craven tan leather, well-padded, with elastic wrist bands.

There will be eleven prizes in the third class. Eleven sets of two pair of Spalding boxing gloves. Regular pattern, made of light-colored soft tanned leather, well-padded, elastic wristbands. These bags and gloves are

The Best that can be obtained anywhere. They are well worth trying for.

HOW TO GET THEM

Think of any exciting boxing bout you have witnessed or participated in. Sit down and write as good a description of it as you know how. Make it lively. Throw in all the upper cuts and half arm jolts, and do it in five hundred words or less.

Every boy who has ever seen a boxing contest has a chance to capture one of the prizes. The contest may be between boys or men, beginners or well-known amateurs. If you should not win a prize you stand a good chance of seeing your story and name in print, anyway.

To become a contestant you must cut out the Boxing Contest Coupon on this page, fill it out properly, and send it to JESSE JAMES WEEKLY, 238 William Street, New York City, together with your article.

No contribution without this coupon will be considered. Come along, boys, and make things hum.

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